

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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GREAT EXPECTATIONS.

BY CHARLES DICKENS.

CHAPTER VI.

My state of mind regarding the pilfering from which I had been so unexpectedly exonerated, did not impel me to frank disclosure; but I hope it had some dregs of good at the bottom of it.

I do not recal that I felt any tenderness of conscience in reference to Mrs. Joe, when the fear of being found out was lifted off me. But I loved Joe—perhaps for no better reason in those early days than because the dear fellow let me love him—and, as to him, my inner self was not so easily composed. It was much upon my mind (particularly when I first saw him looking about for his file) that I ought to tell Joe the whole truth. Yet I did not, and for the reason that I mistrusted that if I did, he would think me worse than I was. The fear of losing Joe's confidence, and of thenceforth sitting in the chimney corner at night staring drearily at my for ever lost companion and friend, tied up my tongue. I morbidly represented to myself that if Joe knew it, I never afterwards could see him at the fireside feeling his fair whisker, without thinking that he was meditating on it. That, if Joe knew it, I never afterwards could see him glance, however casually, at yesterday's meat or pudding when it came on to-day's table, without thinking that he was debating whether I had been in the pantry. That, if Joe knew it, and at any subsequent period of our joint domestic life remarked that his beer was flat or thick, the conviction that he suspected Tar in it, would bring a rush of blood to my face. In a word, I was too cowardly to do what I knew to be right, as I had been too cowardly to avoid doing what I knew to be wrong. I had had no intercourse with the world at that time, and I imitated none of its many inhabitants who act in this manner. Quite an untaught genius, I made the discovery of the line of action for myself.

As I was sleepy before we were far away from the prison-ship, Joe took me on his back again and carried me home. He must have had a tiresome journey of it, for Mr. Wopsle, being knocked up, was in such a very bad temper that if the Church had been thrown open, he would probably have excommunicated the whole expedi-

tion, beginning with Joe and myself. In his lay capacity, he persisted in sitting down in the damp to such an insane extent, that when his coat was taken off to be dried at the kitchen fire, the circumstantial evidence on his trousers would have hanged him if it had been a capital offence.

By that time, I was staggering on the kitchen floor like a little drunkard, through having been newly set upon my feet, and through having been fast asleep, and through waking in the heat and lights and noise of tongues. As I came to myself (with the aid of a heavy thump between the shoulders, and the restorative exclamation "Yah! Was there ever such a boy as this!" from my sister) I found Joe telling them about the convict's confession, and all the visitors suggesting different ways by which he had got into the pantry. Mr. Pumblechook made out, after carefully surveying the premises, that he had first got upon the roof of the forge, and had then got upon the roof of the house, and had then let himself down the kitchen chimney by a rope made of his bedding cut into strips; and as Mr. Pumblechook was very positive and drove his own chaise-cart—over everybody—it was agreed that it must be so. Mr. Wopsle, indeed, wildly cried out "No!" with the feeble malice of a tired man; but, as he had no theory, and no coat on, he was unanimously set at naught—not to mention his smoking hard behind, as he stood with his back to the kitchen fire to draw the damp out: which was not calculated to inspire confidence.

This was all I heard that night before my sister clutched me, as a slumberous offence to the company's eyesight, and assisted me up to bed with such a strong hand that I seemed to have fifty boots on, and to be dangling them all against the edges of the stairs. My state of mind, as I have described it, began before I was up in the morning, and lasted long after the subject had died out, and had ceased to be mentioned saving on exceptional occasions.

CHAPTER VII.

At the time when I stood in the churchyard, reading the family tombstones, I had just enough learning to be able to spell them out. My construction even of their simple meaning was not very correct, for I read "wife of the Above" as a complimentary reference to my father's exaltation to a better world; and if any one of my

deceased relations had been referred to as "Below," I have no doubt I should have formed the worst opinions of that member of the family. Neither were my notions of the theological positions to which my Catechism bound me, at all accurate; for, I have a lively remembrance that I supposed my declaration that I was to "walk in the same all the days of my life," laid me under an obligation always to go through the village from our house in one particular direction, and never to vary it by turning down by the wheelwright's or up by the mill.

When I was old enough, I was to be apprenticed to Joe, and until I could assume that dignity I was not to be what Mrs. Joe called "Pompeyed," or (as I render it) pampered. Therefore, I was not only odd-boy about the forge, but if any neighbour happened to want an extra boy to frighten birds, or pick up stones, or do any such job, I was favoured with the employment. In order, however, that our superior position might not be compromised thereby, a money-box was kept on the kitchen mantelshelf, into which it was publicly made known that all my earnings were dropped. I have an impression that they were to be contributed eventually towards the liquidation of the National Debt, but I know I had no hope of any personal participation in the treasure.

Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt kept an evening school in the village; that is to say, she was a ridiculous old woman of limited means and unlimited infirmity, who used to go to sleep from six to seven every evening, in the society of youth who paid twopence per week each, for the improving opportunity of seeing her do it. She rented a small cottage, and Mr. Wopsle had the room up-stairs, where we students used to overhear him reading aloud in a most dignified and terrific manner, and occasionally bumping on the ceiling. There was a fiction that Mr. Wopsle "examined" the scholars, once a quarter. What he did on those occasions, was to turn up his cuffs, stick up his hair, and give us Mark Antony's oration over the body of Cæsar. This was always followed by Collins's Ode on the Passions, wherein I particularly venerated Mr. Wopsle as Revenge, throwing his blood-stain'd sword in thunder down, and taking the War denouncing trumpet with a withering look. It was not with me then, as it was in later life: when I fell into the society of the Passions, and compared them with Collins and Wopsle, rather to the disadvantage of both gentlemen.

Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt, besides keeping this Educational Institution, kept—in the same room—a little general shop. She had no idea what stock she had, or what the price of anything in it was; but there was a little greasy memorandum-book kept in a drawer, which served as a Catalogue of Prices, and by this oracle, Biddy arranged all the shop transactions. Biddy was Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt's granddaughter; I confess myself quite unequal to the working-out of the problem, what relation she was to Mr. Wopsle. She was an orphan like myself; like me, too, had been brought up by hand. She

was most noticeable, I thought, in respect of her extremities; for, her hair always wanted brushing, her hands always wanted washing, and her shoes always wanted mending and pulling up at heel. This description must be received with a week-day limitation. On Sundays, she went to church elaborated.

Much of my unassisted self, and more by the help of Biddy than of Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt, I struggled through the alphabet as if it had been a bramble-bush; getting considerably worried and scratched by every letter. After that, I fell among those thieves, the nine figures, who seemed every evening to do something new to disguise themselves and baffle recognition. But, at last I began, in a purblind groping way, to read, write, and cipher, on the very smallest scale.

One night, I was sitting in the chimney corner with my slate, expending great efforts on the production of a letter to Joe. I think it must have been a full year after our hunt upon the marshes, for it was a long time after, and it was winter and a hard frost. With an alphabet on the hearth at my feet for reference, I contrived in an hour or two to print and smear this epistle:

"MI DEER JO i OFE U R KRWRITE WELL i OFE i SHAL SON B HABELL 4 2 TEE DGE U JO AN THEN WE SHORL B SO GLODD AN WEN i M PRENGTD 2 U JO WO T LARX AN BLEVE ME INF XN PIP."

There was no indispensable necessity for my communicating with Joe by letter, inasmuch as he sat beside me and we were alone. But, I delivered this written communication (slate and all) with my own hand, and Joe received it as a miracle of erudition.

"I say, Pip, old chap!" cried Joe, opening his blue eyes wide, "what a scholar you are! An't you?"

"I should like to be," said I, glancing at the slate as he held it: with a misgiving that the writing was rather hilly.

"Why, here's a J," said Joe, "and a O equal to anything! Here's a J and a O, Pip, and a J-O, Joe."

I had never heard Joe read aloud to any greater extent than this monosyllable, and I had observed at church last Sunday when I accidentally held our Prayer-Book upside down, that it seemed to suit his convenience quite as well as if it had been all right. Wishing to embrace the present occasion of finding out whether in teaching Joe I should have to begin quite at the beginning, I said, "Ah! But read the rest, Joe."

"The rest, eh, Pip?" said Joe, looking at it with a slowly searching eye, "One, two, three. Why, here's three Js, and three Os, and three J-O, Joes in it, Pip!"

I leaned over Joe, and, with the aid of my forefinger, read him the whole letter.

"Astonishing!" said Joe, when I had finished. "You ARE a scholar."

"How do you spell Gargery, Joe?" I asked him, with a modest patronage.

"I don't spell it at all," said Joe.

"But supposing you did?"

"It *can't* be supposed," said Joe. "Tho' I'm uncommon fond of reading, too."

"Are you, Joe?"

"On-common. Give me," said Joe, "a good book, or a good newspaper, and sit me down afore a good fire, and I ask no better. Lord!" he continued, after rubbing his knees a little, "when you *do* come to a J and a O, and says you, 'Here, at last, is a J-O, Joe,' how interesting reading is!"

I derived from this, that Joe's education, like Steam, was yet in its infancy. Pursuing the subject, I inquired:

"Didn't you ever go to school, Joe, when you were as little as me?"

"No, Pip."

"Why didn't you ever go to school, Joe, when you were as little as me?"

"Well, Pip," said Joe, taking up the poker and settling himself to his usual occupation when he was thoughtful, of slowly raking the fire between the lower bars: "I'll tell you. My father, Pip, he were given to drink, and when he were overtaken with drink, he hammered away at my mother, most unmerciful. It were a'most the only hammering he did, indeed, 'cepting at myself. And he hammered at me with a wigour only to be equalled by the wigour with which he didn't hammer at his anvil.—You're a listening and understanding, Pip?"

"Yes, Joe."

"'Consequence, my mother and me we ran away from my father, several times; and then my mother she'd go out to work, and she'd say, 'Joe,' she'd say, 'now, please God, you shall have some schooling, child,' and she'd put me to school. But my father were that good in his hart that he couldn't abear to be without us. So, he'd come with a most tremendous crowd and make such a row at the doors of the houses where we was, that they used to be obligated to have no more to do with us and to give us up to him. And then he took us home and hammered us. Which, you see, Pip," said Joe, pausing in his meditative raking of the fire, and looking at me, "were a drawback on my learning."

"Certainly, poor Joe!"

"Though mind you, Pip," said Joe, with a judicial touch or two of the poker on the top bar, "rendering unto all their doo, and maintaining equal justice betwixt man and man, my father were that good in his hart, don't you see?"

I didn't see; but I didn't say so.

"Well!" Joe pursued, "somebody must keep the pot a biling, Pip, or the pot won't bile, don't you know?"

I saw that, and said so.

"'Consequence, my father didn't make objections to my going to work; so I went to work at my present calling, which were his too, if he would have followed it, and I worked tolerable hard, I assure you, Pip. In time I were able to keep him, and I kep him till he went off in a purple leptic fit. And it were my intentions to have had put upon his tombstone that What-

sume'er the failings on his part, Remember reader he were that good in his hart."

Joe recited this couplet with such manifest pride and careful perspicuity, that I asked him if he had made it himself?

"I made it," said Joe, "my own self. I made it in a moment. It was like striking out a horseshoe complete, in a single blow. I never was so much surprised in all my life—couldn't credit my own ed—to tell you the truth, hardly believed it *were* my own ed. As I was saying, Pip, it were my intentions to have had it cut over him; but poetry costs money, cut it how you will, small or large, and it were not done. Not to mention bearers, all the money that could be spared were wanted for my mother. She were in poor elth, and quite broke. She weren't long of following, poor soul, and her share of peace come round at last."

Joe's blue eyes turned a little watery; he rubbed, first one of them, and then the other, in a most uncongenial and uncomfortable manner, with the round knob on the top of the poker.

"It were but lonesome then," said Joe, "living here alone, and I got acquainted with your sister. Now, Pip," Joe looked firmly at me, as if he knew I was not going to agree with him; "your sister is a fine figure of a woman."

I could not help looking at the fire, in an obvious state of doubt.

"Whatever family opinions, or whatever the world's opinions, on that subject may be, Pip, your sister is," Joe tapped the top bar with the poker after every word following, "a—fine—figure—of—a—woman!"

I could think of nothing better to say than "I am glad you think so, Joe."

"So am I," returned Joe, catching me up.

"I am glad I think so, Pip. A little redness, or a little matter of Bone, here or there, what does it signify to me?"

I sagaciously observed, if it didn't signify to him, to whom did it signify?

"Certainly!" assented Joe. "That's it. You're right, old chap! When I got acquainted with your sister, it were the talk how she was bringing you up by hand. Very kind of her too, all the folks said, and I said, along with all the folks. As to you," Joe pursued, with a countenance expressive of seeing something very nasty indeed: "if you could have been aware how small and flabby and mean you was, dear me, you'd have formed the most contemptible opinions of yourself!"

Not exactly relishing this, I said, "Never mind me, Joe."

"But I did mind you, Pip," he returned, with tender simplicity. "When I offered to your sister to keep company, and to be asked in church at such times as she was willing and ready to come to the forge, I said to her, 'And bring the poor little child. God bless the poor little child,' I said to your sister, 'there's room for *him* at the forge!'"

I broke out crying and begging pardon, and hugged Joe round the neck: who dropped the poker to hug me, and to say, "Ever the

best of friends; an't us, Pip? Don't cry, old chap!"

When this little interruption was over, Joe resumed:

"Well, you see, Pip, and here we are! That's about where it lights; here we are! Now, when you take me in hand in my learning, Pip (and I tell you beforehand I am awful dull, most awful dull), Mrs. Joe mustn't see too much of what we're up to. It must be done, as I may say, on the sly. And why on the sly? I'll tell you why, Pip."

He had taken up the poker again; without which, I doubt if he could have proceeded in his demonstration.

"Your sister is given to government."

"Given to government, Joe?" I was startled, for I had some shadowy idea (and I am afraid I must add, hope) that Joe had divorced her in favour of the Lords of the Admiralty, or Treasury.

"Given to government," said Joe. "Which I meantsay the government of you and myself."

"Oh!"

"And she an't over partial to having scholars on the premises," Joe continued, "and in particular would not be over partial to my being a scholar, for fear as I might rise. Like a sort of rebel, don't you see?"

I was going to retort with an inquiry, and had got as far as "Why——" when Joe stopped me.

"Stay a bit. I know what you're a going to say, Pip; stay a bit! I don't deny that your sister comes the Mo-gul over us, now and again. I don't deny that she do throw us back-falls, and that she do drop down upon us heavy. At such times as when your sister is on the Ram-page, Pip," Joe sank his voice to a whisper and glanced at the door, "candour compels fur to admit that she is a Buster."

Joe pronounced this word, as if it began with at least twelve capital Bs.

"Why don't I rise? That were your observation when I broke it off, Pip?"

"Yes, Joe."

"Well," said Joe, passing the poker into his left hand, that he might feel his whisker; and I had no hope of him whenever he took to that placid occupation; "your sister's a master-mind. A master-mind."

"What's that?" I asked, in some hope of bringing him to a stand. But, Joe was readier with his definition than I had expected, and completely stopped me by arguing circularly, and answering with a fixed look, "Her."

"And I an't a master-mind," Joe resumed, when he had unfixed his look, and got back to his whisker. "And last of all, Pip—and this I want to say very serous to you, old chap—I see so much in my poor mother, of a woman drudging and slaving and breaking her honest hart and never getting no peace in her mortal days, that I'm dead afeard of going wrong in the way of not doing what's right by a woman, and I'd fur rather of the two go wrong the t'other way, and be a little ill-convenienced my-

self. I wish it was only me that got put out, Pip; I wish there warn't no Tickler for you, old chap; I wish I could take it all on myself; but this is the up-and-down-and-straight on it, Pip, and I hope you'll overlook short-comings."

Young as I was, I believe that I dated a new admiration of Joe from that night. We were equals afterwards, as we had been before; but, afterwards at quiet times when I sat looking at Joe and thinking about him, I had a new sensation of feeling conscious that I was looking up to Joe in my heart.

"However," said Joe, rising to replenish the fire; "here's the Dutch-clock a working himself up to being equal to striking Eight of 'em, and she's not come home yet! I hope Uncle Pumblechook's mare mayn't have set a fore-foot on a piece o' ice, and gone down."

Mrs. Joe made occasional trips with Uncle Pumblechook on market days, to assist him in buying such household stuffs and goods as required a woman's judgment; Uncle Pumblechook being a bachelor and reposing no confidences in his domestic servant. This was market-day, and Mrs. Joe was out on one of these expeditions.

Joe made the fire and swept the hearth, and then we went to the door to listen for the chaise-cart. It was a dry cold night, and the wind blew keenly, and the frost was white and hard. A man would die to-night of lying out on the marshes, I thought. And then I looked at the stars, and considered how awful it would be for a man to turn his face up to them as he froze to death, and see no help or pity in all the glittering multitude.

"Here comes the mare," said Joe, "ringing like a peal of bells!"

The sound of her iron shoes upon the hard road was quite musical, as she came along at a much brisker trot than usual. We got a chair out ready for Mrs. Joe's alighting, and stirred up the fire that they might see a bright window, and took a final survey of the kitchen that nothing might be out of its place. When we had completed these preparations, they drove up, wrapped to the eyes. Mrs. Joe was soon landed, and Uncle Pumblechook was soon down too, covering the mare with a cloth, and we were soon all in the kitchen, carrying so much cold air in with us that it seemed to drive all the heat out of the fire.

"Now," said Mrs. Joe, unwrapping herself with haste and excitement, and throwing her bonnet back on her shoulders where it hung by the strings: "if this boy an't grateful this night, he never will be!"

I looked as grateful as any boy possibly could, who was wholly uninformed why he ought to assume that expression.

"It's only to be hoped," said my sister, "that he won't be Pompeyed. But I have my fears."

"She an't in that line, mum," said Mr. Pumblechook. "She knows better."

She? I looked at Joe, making the motion with my lips and eyebrows, "She?" Joe

looked at me, making the motion with *his* lips and eyebrows, "She?" My sister catching him in the act, he drew the back of his hand across his nose with his usual conciliatory air on such occasions, and looked at her.

"Well?" said my sister, in her snappish way. "What are you staring at? Is the house a-fire?"
—"Which some individual," Joe politely hinted, "mentioned—she."

"And she is a she, I suppose?" said my sister. "Unless you call Miss Havisham a he. And I doubt if even you'll go so far as that."

"Miss Havisham, up town?" said Joe.

"Is there any Miss Havisham down town?" returned my sister. "She wants this boy to go and play there. And of course he's going. And he had better play there," said my sister, shaking her head at me as an encouragement to be extremely light and sportive, "or I'll work him."

I had heard of Miss Havisham up town—everybody for miles round, had heard of Miss Havisham up town—as an immensely rich and grim lady who lived in a large and dismal house barricaded against robbers, and who led a life of seclusion.

"Well to be sure!" said Joe, astounded. "I wonder how she come to know Pip!"

"Noodle!" cried my sister. "Who said she knew him?"

"Which some individual," Joe again politely hinted, "mentioned that she wanted him to go and play there."

"And couldn't she ask Uncle Pumblechook if he knew of a boy to go and play there? Isn't it just barely possible that Uncle Pumblechook may be a tenant of hers, and that he may sometimes—we won't say quarterly or half yearly, for that would be requiring too much of you—but sometimes—go there to pay his rent? And couldn't she then ask Uncle Pumblechook if he knew of a boy to go and play there? And couldn't Uncle Pumblechook, being always considerate and thoughtful for us—though you may not think it, Joseph," in a tone of the deepest reproach, as if he were the most callous of nephews, "then mention this boy, standing Prancing here"—which I solemnly declare I was not doing—"that I have for ever been a willing slave to?"

"Good again!" cried Uncle Pumblechook. "Well put! Prettily pointed! Good indeed! Now Joseph, you know the case."

"No Joseph," said my sister, still in a reproachful manner, while Joe apologetically drew the back of his hand across and across his nose, "you do not yet—though you may not think it—know the case. You may consider that you do, but you do *not* Joseph. For you do not know that Uncle Pumblechook, being sensible that for anything we can tell, this boy's fortune may be made by his going to Miss Havisham's, has offered to take him into town to-night in his own chaise-cart, and to keep him to-night, and to take him with his own hands to Miss Havisham's to-morrow morning. And Lor-a-mussy me!" cried my sister, casting off her bonnet in sudden desperation, "here I stand talking to mere

Mooncalfs, with Uncle Pumblechook waiting, and the mare catching cold at the door, and the boy grimed with crock and dirt from the hair of his head to the sole of his foot!"

With that, she pounced upon me, like an eagle on a lamb, and my face was squeezed into wooden bowls in sinks, and my head was put under taps of water-butts, and I was soaped, and kneaded, and towelled, and thumped, and harrowed, and rasped, until I really was quite beside myself. (I may here remark that I suppose myself to be better acquainted than any living authority, with the ridgy effect of a wedding-ring, passing unsympathetically over the human countenance.)

When my ablutions were completed, I was put into clean linen of the stiffest character, like a young penitent into sackcloth, and was trussed up in my tightest and fearfulest suit. I was then delivered over to Mr. Pumblechook, who formally received me as if he were the Sheriff, and who let off upon me the speech that I knew he had been dying to make all along: "Boy, be for ever grateful to all friends, but especially unto them which brought you up by hand!"

"Good-bye, Joe!"

"God bless you, Pip, old chap!"

I had never parted from him before, and what with my feelings and what with soap-suds, I could at first see no stars from the chaise-cart. But they twinkled out one by one, without throwing any light on the questions why on earth I was going to play at Miss Havisham's, and what on earth I was expected to play at.

THE MOON.

THE moonlight aspects both of mighty cities and of wild and natural scenery—moonlight walks, and moonlight drives—offer a most agreeable variety in the number of impressions which lie within the range of human enjoyment. The season, too, has now arrived when the sun's brief stay above the horizon renders the moon a much more conspicuous object in our eyes, than she is during the longer and lighter days of summer. Most persons, at present, will prefer having some precise idea of the surface of the silvery luminary which shines overhead, to discussing whether the spots that are visible upon it represent a face merely, or a man at full-length carrying a fagot of sticks upon his shoulders. We therefore direct our readers' attention to a clear and admirable map of the moon by Messieurs Leconteur and A. Chapuis, published this summer, and accompanied by an excellent explanatory pamphlet. The map (in which the moon is delineated with a diameter of very nearly sixteen inches, and which is the only general chart of our satellite that has been given to the French public for the last two centuries*) is sold in Paris for three francs. At a London bookseller's it would cost a trifle more, to which must be added a shilling or so for the little treatise which is at the same time put into your

* There are partial maps, and small confused maps, as in Arago's Popular Astronomy.

hands. Together, they make a very cheap five-shillings' worth of information and amusement, if we may be allowed to apply the latter term to speculations so disconnected from the world in which we actually live.

With a moderate telescope, the observer can compare what he sees in the sky with what is mapped out on paper before him, and so can study Lunar Topography bit by bit. For this reason, the moon is drawn in the map as it is seen through an astronomical (not a *land*) telescope; namely, reversed. The North Pole is at the bottom, and the East is to the left. To get an exact idea how the moon would look if it could be seen, so magnified, by the naked eye, you have only to turn the map upside down. It represents the moon at the full, although the observations on which it is founded were taken during the different phases which occur between one new moon and the next. The full moon being illuminated by the sun directly in front of it, displays its mountains and cirques without the projection of any shadow; their peaks and outward edges appear bright white. In order to give relief to the inequalities of the surface, the moon has been portrayed as if seen during her crescent period, when she receives the sun's light from the right, and casts her shadows towards the left. The name of Seas, improperly given by ancient astronomers to the lunar plains, has been retained. The *chains* of mountains have names borrowed from those which exist on earth; as the Pyrenees, the Apennines, the Carpathians. The annular mountains, or cirques (which are much more numerous), are named after celebrated scientific men; as Cassini, Tycho, Copernicus, Playfair. The elevation of the highest mountains is calculated in mètres, approximatively and in round numbers, measured from the bottom of the internal cavity to the top of the rampart.

Since the publication of the map and its explanation, one of its authors, we regret to state, has prematurely closed his mortal career at the early age of forty-one. Henri Lecouturier was the son of a general of the Empire, who, wounded severely at Eylau, died young, leaving little more behind him than an honourable name and the title of baron. Brought up to the law, young Lecouturier devoted himself entirely to science instead, with an ardent and disinterested passion. He loved knowledge for itself. He thirsted after information, for information's sake alone, not bestowing on his worldly interests even the attention which common prudence required; nor was he conscious yet of the great talent for clear and methodical explanation which he afterwards was found to possess. His small patrimony was thus dwindled down to next to nothing. The revolution of 1848 excited him to write a political work, *La Cosmophilie*, now extremely rare, which did him little good, except as an exercise in the art of writing. No bookseller would publish it; in 1850, he printed it himself with the remnant of his little fund. It did not sell; somebody bought the remainder of the edition for a trifle.

But Lecouturier had commenced the struggle; he saw clearly before him the road which he was destined to follow; he was born to be a writer. He had married a woman without fortune, whom he lost when his prospects began to brighten. His trials were severe, but his courage was unflinching. In 1854, his appointment as scientific editor to the *Pays* newspaper established his position, and displayed the peculiar merits for which the reading public admired him. Lecouturier was no great discoverer; he propounded no important novel theories, he brought to light no unknown natural phenomena, and can hardly be said to have extended the existing limits of human knowledge. But, instead of creating light, he was gifted with the faculty of spreading it. He had the art of communicating to the unlearned many of the secrets possessed by the learned few. He unlocked science from the strong-box of dog-Latin, mathematical formulæ, and technical language, in which selfish pedants might be inclined to keep it imprisoned, and then spread it broadcast over the world. He was a lucid populariser of abstruse things. Of late, astronomy was his favourite pursuit. His numerous labours were contributions to periodical literature; his most important work, as a whole, is the *Panorama des Mondes*, unfortunately still unfinished. His life was shortened by his incessant toil. He is much regretted as a modest, simple, and amiable man, whose society was a pleasure, and his friendship an honourable satisfaction.

Until the invention of telescopes, the most learned astronomers could know no more of the physical condition of the moon than the most unmathematical sailor or coast-guard who keeps his watch by night. The clearness of a southern sky might help them a little, but not much. They might see that the moon's disk was made up of darker and brighter portions, some of which have a clearly defined outline, such as those which may be distinguished by the naked eye in the upper part towards the right. That nearest to the edge—a small dark spot, completely surrounded by a bright ground—is what astronomers call the Sea of Crises. Nearer to the middle of the disk is a larger dark irregular patch, the Sea of Serenity, which forms one of the eyes—a severe black eye, such as might be the result of a fight—if we suppose the moon to represent the human face. The equatorial portion of the moon is occupied by a considerable breadth of shadowy parts, whose broken and undecided outline has given rise to the idea of the Man in the Moon, which is recorded by unanimous and almost universal tradition. Imagination supplied every defect in the picture. The Sea of Tranquillity, which forms the body, divides into the Seas of Fecundity and of Nectar, which represent the legs. One arm is formed by a jutting gulf of the Sea of Tranquillity to the right; the other by a larger gulf, called the Sea of Vapours. According to this reading of lunar geography, the Sea of Serenity is the man's bundle of sticks; in the southern hemisphere, to the left, is the Sea of Humours,

suggesting the notion of the little dog trotting in front of his master, the man. The whole of the upper left portion of the moon's disk is more uniformly sombre, but also less dark, in general, than the decided spots that are seen to the right. In that part, the unaided eye can hardly make out any marked divisions; the borders of the immense spot, which covers half the western portion of the lunar disk, melt away and become confounded with the brighter portions of our satellite. The northern extremity of this great spot is formed by the Sea of Rain; the southern end by the Sea of Clouds, which is contiguous to the Sea of Humours. Besides these spots, which occupy about a third of the lunar disk, the unassisted eye can only distinguish a confused sprinkling of luminous points. Plutarch was the author of the notion that the shaded parts of the moon are seas, from which a fainter light would be reflected than from areas of solid rock or land. He also suspected that the spots might be extremely deep caverns, which would entirely absorb the rays of the sun.

On the map, or with a telescope of moderate power, there is a marvellous change in the aspect of the moon. The bright parts are covered with apparently innumerable spots, like circular patches of grease floating in a basin of mutton-broth, of which nothing could be distinguished before, but which, on closer inspection, appear as if bubbles had burst on the surface of some molten metal, which had suddenly cooled before the depression made by the blister had time to fill up again. The moon's face is deeply pitted, scarred, and seamed with a fiery small-pox, which must have broken out in her early infancy, and which has left indelible traces of its ravages. Some few of these circular spots, which Galileo compared to the eyes on a peacock's tail, are surrounded by straight rays, which radiate from them as if from a central luminous star. Not far from the south pole, in the midst of the great luminous patch which nearly covers the southern hemisphere, is the remarkable circular mountain, Tycho, from which a number of slightly curved rays stretch to a great extent in all directions, giving to that part of the moon somewhat the appearance of being slightly ribbed like a melon. Most extraordinary phenomena also are sundry bright, wavy, narrow stripes, some single and some branched, one of which crosses the Sea of Serenity; another runs along one side of the Sea of Crises; another lies on the north-western edge of the moon, beyond the Ocean of Tempests. One of the darkest spots on the moon, the inner part or crater of a circular mountain, named Plato, is not far from the north pole, a little to the west of the central meridian. It looks as black and hollow as if it were an immense dry well of a profundity that baffles imagination. It is a bottomless peak cavern, but with no stream of water gushing out of its yawning, thirsty mouth. The small craters in the moon are countless; more than fifty thousand have been already observed. No attempt has been made to delineate them in Lecouturier's map,

whose aim has been clearness rather than profuse detail.

Of all the heavenly bodies, the moon is the nearest to us and the easiest to observe. It is especially interesting as the boundary between astronomy and meteorology; everything above the moon is in the celestial heavens, and consequently belongs to the former science; everything below the moon is in the terrestrial sky, in the atmosphere, and therefore lies within the domain of the latter. The connexion between the moon and the earth is closer than is often suspected. If a line be drawn from the centre of the earth to the centre of the moon, there lies in it a point (much nearer to the moon than to us) where the moon's and the earth's attraction on any material object are exactly equal. If the object be removed a little towards us, it will fall upon the earth; a little the other way, it will be drawn towards the moon. Arago has calculated the force necessary to shoot a body from the moon to reach this intermediate point of equilibrium, and finds it to be by no means an impossible or unattainable force. Consequently, it is not improbable that many (though perhaps not all) of the meteoric stones that fall, are sent hither from the moon. It would be very possible for an inhabitant of the moon, supposing such inhabitant to exist, to keep up a daily communication with the earth by means of projectiles. For us to reply to the correspondence, would be immensely more difficult. The nearness and conspicuousness of the moon have caused the human race, from the highest antiquity, to attribute to it great influence on the variations of the weather.

The earth and the moon are planets, or wandering globes, both receiving their light from their common centre of attraction, the sun; but the moon is much the greater wanderer of the two; for, being a satellite, or follower, she is constantly travelling round her principal, while her principal only travels round the sun. Her orbit round the earth not being circular but elliptical, she is sometimes nearer to us than at other times, the extreme difference of distance being about twenty-five thousand miles. Her mean distance from the earth is about two hundred and forty thousand miles, which is a mere trifle compared with the distances of the other planets, and which looks like proximity itself if we consider the distances even of the nearest fixed stars. The moon is about two thousand one hundred and seventy-five miles through. In regard to volume, or size, she is only one forty-ninth of the magnitude of the earth; to compare their respective densities or heaviness, the earth, taken as a whole, is nearly five and a half times as heavy as water, while the moon is only something more than three and a quarter times as heavy as water. If we weigh one against the other, we must put eighty-eight globes like the moon into one scale before it will balance the earth in the other.

The most remarkable fact is that the moon always shows us one and the same illuminated face; which is said to be caused by the perfect

equality of the time of the moon's revolution on her own axis and of her revolution round the earth. The moon, however, is subject to a slight swinging motion, called her libration, which brings sometimes a little piece of one side of the unseen hemisphere into view, and sometimes a little piece of the other. The cause of the libration is thus explained: When the moon passed from a liquefied, or fused, to a solid state, under the influence of the earth's attraction, she assumed a form less regular than would have been if no powerful attractive body had existed in her neighbourhood. The moon's equator, which would have been circular, was pulled into an ellipse by the action of our globe. The moon would, therefore, appear to an observer situated in open space who could look at it transversely, as an egg-shaped body drawn out in the direction of the earth—as a sort of pendulum without a visible string or rod of connexion, the real rod being the force of gravity. When a pendulum is pushed out of the perpendicular, its own weight brings it back again: when the moon's major axis leaves its usual position, the earth's attraction in like manner forces it to return. The human race will never see but one face of the moon. This strange phenomenon may be thus accounted for without having recourse to an almost miraculous coincidence between the moon's times of rotation and revolution, which are really quite independent of each other; we find that it is due to a physical cause, which is calculable, although it is visible only to the eyes of the mind—namely, to the lengthening of one diameter, which took place in consequence of the earth's attraction, when the moon cooled down into a solid body. If there had existed, at the outset, a slight difference between the moon's movements of rotation and revolution, the earth's attraction would have reduced those movements to the strict equality which we witness now.

And, as the fact of the moon exposed to our view remains ever unchanged, so does the aspect of that face. Schröter studied the moon for years, in order to ascertain whether any alteration of her surface could be discovered. Maedler, who began, in 1830, a grand topographical map of the moon, which, with its accompanying treatise, was published at Berlin in 1837, was obliged to come to the conclusion that, as far as we are permitted to judge, there is no living thing, nor will there ever be, in the moon. Any one who could behold the earth from a distance, would have his view of our continents and oceans continually intercepted by curtains of clouds; as one position became unveiled, another would be shrouded in shifting mists. Spring would tinge vast tracts of forest land with green; winter would silver over still wider areas with white. We see nothing of this in the moon; not a cloud, not a token of change of season, not an exhalation to betray the presence of water, not a refracted ray or tinge of varying colour to give reason to suspect an atmosphere. The moon herself never offers the slightest obstacle to our minutest inspection; when we

cannot see her, she is hid only by the happy mutations to which the terrestrial atmosphere is subject.

From these circumstances, the conclusion, perhaps too hasty, has been arrived at, that the moon is not only dead, but is a mummified dead body, utterly uninhabitable. Huygens, the first who stated that the moon had no atmosphere capable of refracting the light of the stars, more cautiously expressed his belief that the inhabitants of the moon, if any, must be quite differently constituted to ourselves. At present, there exists a tendency to revise the verdict of "Found Dead," which preceding centuries have pronounced on the moon. By a comparison of old drawings made by careful astronomers with the most exact sketches that can be taken now, Mr. Webb believes that notable changes have taken place on the moon's surface. Father Secchi concludes, from experiments, that the topmost points of the lofty mountains may be covered with ice and snow. Mr. Delarue concludes, from his photographic observations, that the moon has an atmosphere, which is very shallow, but relatively very dense, and that the vast space entitled seas are neither more nor less than forests.

Apropos of vegetation, there are known on the surface of the moon some hundred luminous furrows or grooves, already mentioned, whose nature remains as yet unexplained. They were once thought the dry beds of rivers; but that cannot be. Their length varies from ten to a hundred and twenty miles; their greatest breadth is about a mile, but the majority are much narrower. Their edges are parallel and very steep; their depth must be great. Some stretch onwards in straight lines, others are slightly curved, but all are generally isolated. A few cross, or branch into, each other, like veins. There are some which traverse the craters of mountains, while others terminate at the steep rampart which surrounds them. They are visible everywhere, except in the region of the highest mountains. Many more of these luminous furrows exist than are laid down in M. Lecouturier's map; the small ones were omitted to avoid confusion.

A German astronomer, M. Schwabe, undertook the elucidation of the mystery, by studying the furrows with powerful telescopes. He found them to be composed, at certain epochs, of fine parallel dark lines, separated by luminous rays. In the course of several months, the dark lines and luminous rays disappear, but not for good and all; they are afterwards reproduced, disappearing again, and so on, continually. These periodical appearances and disappearances are interpreted by M. Schwabe as a phenomenon of vegetation. He holds the dark lines to be rows of green trees, and the bright lines which separate them to be naked sterile vacant spaces which acquire the look of luminous stripes from the contrast of the dark trees fringing them. The disappearance of the bright and sombre lines is attributed to the trees' shedding their foliage. Whether this explanation be correct or not, the

question of an atmosphere in the moon, and consequently of its vegetation and the habitability of its surface, is again taken into consideration by the most competent astronomers. With the greater means now at their disposal, we may entertain more sanguine hopes of their ultimate success.

Still, there are difficulties in making good lunar observations. Throughout the whole of the lunar month, no two days show exactly the same extent of illuminated disk; the illuminated sides are different during the first and the latter halves of the month. The length of the shadows cast by the very same asperities is constantly varying from day to day. The full moon is flooded with light; there is no shadow to give relief; the tops of the mountains are indicated only by luminous points, and the ramparts of the circuses by simple lines. At new moon, there is no light at all, and she cannot even be distinguished. When two or three days old, the earthshine on the dark part of the disk is just sufficient to show that the moon is round, but not sufficient to enable us to discover any further details. Certainly, at the first and the last quarter, when the boundary of the illuminated part lies in the middle of the disk, the moon offers a most picturesque spectacle. Earth can show no scene of ruin, no chaos of destruction, equal to that presented by the half-lighted and splintered circuses of the centre. More to the north, towards the border of the Sea of Rain, is the grand so-called chain of the Apennines, displaying their summits as clearly defined as those of terrestrial mountains whose peaks appear rising above a distant horizon.

But we must neither expect to see more than is possible, nor that what we do see should resemble an earthly landscape. We call the inhabitants of New Zealand our antipodes, because they walk with their feet exactly opposite to ours; when we stand perpendicularly upright they hang perpendicularly downright. If the earth were transparent, we should have a full view of the soles of their feet, with the rest of their persons foreshortened, as painters call it. The men in the moon, on the contrary, are exactly our anticephalæ; their heads are opposite to ours; if the intervening space were annihilated, we and they should be laying our heads together. Consequently, could any telescope show us an inhabitant of the moon, we should see him exactly as we look down upon a passenger in the street walking on the pavement immediately beneath our third-story window. We could only see the crown of his hat, his shoulders, the point of his nose, the tips of his toes, and perhaps the equatorial regions of his corpulency. To know what he is really like, we should have to request him to lie down on the flat of his back, and then to roll over and show his other side. The same of lunar animals; their dogs and horses would appear in the same position as flies crawling up a wall or on a ceiling. One advantage we gain by this; we can peep down the immense craters of the moon's volcanoes, and see what there is inside them.

The highest magnifying power which can at the same time be most usefully employed in our climate is that of one hundred diameters, which brings our satellite to an apparent distance of something less than two thousand five hundred miles. Beer and Maeder could not advantageously go beyond a power of three hundred diameters, reducing her distance to eight hundred miles. But even that is still too far off to examine an unknown country with any minuteness. Lord Rosse has brought much higher powers to bear upon the moon, on whose surface his gigantic telescope clearly distinguishes areas of about eighty yards square. Therefore, although it would not show us a lunar elephant, nevertheless vast herds of animals, like the crowds of buffaloes in North America, would be perfectly visible, as would also be the case with armies marching in battle array. Towns analogous to ours could not escape our observation, any more than the courses of rivers, of canals, of roads, and of railways, and especially regular plantations and other crops that are grown on a scale of any magnitude.

Some of the above-mentioned optical appliances bring the moon sufficiently near to enable us to study her geology. No earthly scene, as already stated, can give any idea of the desolation reigning there. The whole sphere appears to have been formerly torn up from its very entrails. The so-called seas are most generally supposed to be arid plains of sand. The circular ramparts of the mountains, in shape like amphitheatres, enclose vast craters with one or more cones rising from their bottom. These ramparts are broken by a multitude of breaches, and at their feet lie prodigious heaps of shattered rocks, which do not appear to be held together or covered by any sort of vegetable mould. Lord Rosse's telescope shows the flat bottom of the grand crater of Albategnes to be completely sprinkled over with broken rocks; and Father Secchi has obtained a photographic image of the enormous fragments of rock which are piled at the bottom of the annular enclosure which forms the Circus of Copernicus.

More than two centuries ago, Robert Hooke, the contemporary and opponent of Newton, believed he had discovered the secret of the moon's geological formations. He is said to have obtained artificial imitations of the lunar craters, by boiling thick calcareous mud until the disengagement of its elastic vapours produced bubbles on its surface, which, in bursting, left cavities with an annular edge. If the same process once took place in the moon, both water and gas must have existed there; and, as nothing is annihilated, we may ask what became of them. Can they be decomposed and combined with other substances, or are they lying concentrated and hid in the deep hollows and wide chasms with which there is every reason to believe the interior of the moon is torn and dislocated.

M. Faye, a distinguished French astronomer, says that the moon's surface is quite new, so to speak; that is, it has undergone no wear and

tear. The earth's superficies, although much more recent, has been worn and ground down in all directions by the continual action of wind and water. The moon is the object in which to study plutonian action, or the effects of heat in all their purity, and deserves more attention than she has hitherto received from competent observers. Her singular marshes, gulfs, and seas; her circular valleys; her gigantic star-shaped formations; her isolated mountains, standing on level ground, without any apparent rise of the surrounding strata; her rectilinear fissures, which look like canals dug by an intelligent hand; her innumerable variety of oblong hills, lying nearly in the same direction with, but a slight deviation from, the meridian lines; the different shades of her soil, from the stellar brightness of certain peaks, up to sombre grey and steel blue; all these diverse appearances make a strong appeal to natural history and geology.

But this study is rendered more difficult by the preconceived ideas which we entertain. Thus, there is a too striking analogy between her principal formations and earthly volcanoes. In these latter, however, you have to climb to a considerable height from the solid ground before you reach the circular rampart, and you have to descend only a little way to get to the bottom of the upheaved crater. In the moon it is exactly the reverse. It is a general rule, to which there is no known exception, that the bottom of all the circuses is profoundly depressed below the surrounding soil. If you are looking at a rampart which rises five hundred yards above the ground outside it, be sure that its top will be from one thousand to fifteen hundred yards, sometimes three thousand yards, above the level of the bottom of the crater. And yet this bottom does not look in any respect like an excavation whose contents have been hollowed out by throwing them up; for, in the most extensive circuses, this bottom follows the general curvature of the moon, and appears simply to form part of a smaller inner sphere with a shorter radius. Add to this, the absence of any real chain of mountains; those so called are, in all probability, nothing but the remains of ancient broken-up circuses. We may, therefore, admit that the formation of the lunar mountains is due to causes completely different to those which have fashioned our own terrestrial crust.

Although the moon does not, like the earth, exhibit a surface partly covered with land and partly with water, but appears to be entirely coated with solid substances, still her different parts present as varied an aspect as the earth would do to a dweller in the moon; without, however, there being the slightest resemblance between the planet and the satellite. The moon has only regions of plain and regions of mountain, and the difference between flat and hilly ground suffices to produce the strange contrasts which we observe; the former appears dull and sombre, whilst the other is bright and luminous.

Observers are not agreed about the colour of

the lunar plains. Some say that no tint but grey is to be seen; Humboldt asserts that the Sea of Crises is grey mixed with dark green, and that the Seas of Serenity and of Humours are likewise green. A reddish tinge prevails in the Marsh of Sleep. The circular plains whose centre is not occupied by mountains, are mostly grey approaching to blue, resembling polished steel. But Julius Schmidt holds that the plains of the moon are not really coloured with green, but that it depends on the state of our atmosphere, and still more on the way in which we make use of a telescope. If he could prove that there was no green in the moon, it would be a serious objection to the belief that her plains are covered with rich vegetation analogous to that of our tropical countries. But whatever doubt there may be respecting the hues of red and green, there can be none about the great contrasts of light and darkness. Grimaldi, Plato, and Endymion are circuses, each enclosing a very black crater. The most brilliant point, shining like a lighthouse, is the summit of Aristarchus, between the Ocean of Tempests and the Sea of Rain.

At full moon, as before stated, the sun's rays fall directly on the visible hemisphere of our satellite; every shadow disappears, and its rugged mountains exhibit no relief whatever. If, at that time, we examine it with a telescope of some power, our eye is immediately attracted by certain mountains which are resplendent with light, and which are surrounded by a sort of glory whose rays dart to great distances in all directions. These radiating mountains offer a miniature resemblance to vulgar pictures of the rising sun. The rays convert the annular mountains, their focuses, into so many radiating systems; they exhibit the appearance of luminous trains which attain a breadth of from twelve to five and twenty miles; their length is considerable, occasionally exceeding five hundred, and even seven hundred and fifty miles. These luminous projections cast no shadow: hence, they cannot be spurs or buttresses of the mountain. They stretch with equal intensity of light over plain and mountain up to heights of more than nine thousand feet, and that without effacing the outline of the irregularities of the ground over which they pass.

Many opinions have been hazarded as to the nature of these luminous trains. Sir J. Herschel thought they might be formed by ancient streams of lava; but there is no evidence to confirm the supposition. Those illustrious selenographers Lohrmann and Maedler exerted every means in their power to obtain a knowledge of these mysterious ribbons of light, but they have failed to give any satisfactory explanation. Humboldt believed that there is no guessing what changes in the soil could determine the presence of luminous rays around certain annular mountains. It is singular that they should not become visible to us until the sun's direct rays efface every shadow in the moon, and that they should disappear as soon as the light again falls obliquely and the

shadows begin to lengthen over the plains. There is therefore no radiation either at the first or last quarters, nor during all the time that the shadows cast by peaks and hills are visible to us. The principal radiating mountains in the moon are Tycho, Copernicus, Kepler, and Aristarchus; but by far the most important, and the one which excites the greatest admiration, is Tycho.

From this majestic centre there start, in all directions, immense rays, more than a hundred in number, which extend over almost half the moon's southern hemisphere. They attain their greatest development in the direction of the east, the north-east, and the north. One of them, sensibly directed towards the east, reaches the circus of Neander at a distance of nearly seven hundred and fifty miles. Below it, is a ray of prodigious length, which traverses the whole of the mountainous region, stretches over the Sea of Nectar, and stops at the foot of the Pyrenees, after traversing a distance of more than nine hundred miles. Towards the north-west, the rays which spring from Tycho extend beyond the mountainous country quite into the midst of the Sea of Clouds. One of them in that direction is especially remarkable, advancing nearly four hundred miles, as far as the circus of Bouillaud. Its breadth is even more striking than its length, producing the effect of a luminous furrow, whose edges are raised, and whose middle is hollow like a cradle.

FORGIVEN.

FAST from the land of gold the good ship bore us,
While the blue distance ebb'd in silver mist;
The sunset, like a dove's neck, changed before us,
In hues of sapphire, gold, and amethyst,
That went and came,
Surg'd into shade, or melted into flame.

We had been wed three summers. I had ta'en
A helpmeet more for use than love or passion;
Our marriage days had passed in common fashion,
Nor sweet nor bitter, neither joy nor pain.
She was my wife, I knew, and nothing more,
A labourer hired to pick up coin, and toil:
Such wives were common on the young crude soil.
We sailed from, hailing for an English shore.
And in the daily tumult when my brain
Was busied in the earnest act of gain,
I simply saw she helped the household store
And did her duty, lending labour meet;
I had no time to find her incomplete.
But when the toil was ended, and my place
Was emptied in the wild imperfect land,
I would have had a gentler face,
A plurer duty and a softer hand,
To hush the happy tumult in my breast,
And beautify the sense of well-earned rest.
Then, worn with bitterness and sorely tried,
Grown old in head and heart at thirty-seven,
I thought the common woman at my side
Looked petty by a sweeter face in Heaven.

She saw it in my face as in a book,
And made me shudder at her silent look;
Our lives were wide apart,
She was my wife, but not my other heart.

Her bitterness was silent as my pride,
Our words were calm, our hearts were hard and deep;
But once, as I lay waking at her side,
The common woman cursed me in her sleep!

Rich hours were mine, those happy days at sea,
Seasoned with pleasant talk of godly minds;
Our vessel bravely took the driving winds,
Swift as a ship could be.

I loved to think of England, and the joy
Found in her pleasant places when a boy,
Her copsy villages, her streets and marts,
Her woodland nooks, her peaceful country cheer,
And some few friendly hearts

That beat with happy hopes as I drew near.
Then over all the pleasant dream there stole
Soft fancies of a churchyard still and lone,
A little hamlet, and a sweet lost soul
Mocked by an epitaph as cold as stone;
But when I thought of her, before the best
And very sweetest thought within my breast—
The patient wife I lost in other years,
Once a sweet memory interdicting pain—
A dark doubt startled out from happy tears
And stung along my brain.

But with us in the ship sailed one, a maid,
Whose sweetness pleased my humour calm and staid:
I think her pretty childish ways destroyed
The selfish demon in me, more or less;
For contrast made us friends, and I enjoyed
Her chiding tricks of sinless tenderness.
So, often in the calm and sunny weather,
We, sitting side by side, read books together;
And whispered in the twilight shadows dun
Of the green isle towards the setting sun.
She put a boyhood in my blood again
In kindred with her girlish views; I caught
Her fireside warmth of tone, her innocent thought,
Taught by her clearer heart and giddier brain;
She gave my fancy wings,
And brought me closer unto humankind,
Giving new colour to my moody mind,
And sober estimate of men and things.
Yet, when I lay apart,
And communed in the darkness with my heart,
I shuddered—for this long-forgotten lore
Would seem to vindicate my grosser part,
And my thoughts wronged the sleeping woman more.

I was the sinner, and not she,
The woman with hard hands—'twas I alone;
I was the sinner, and my flesh and bone
Were sinned against by me.
I was the sinner—speak it out, O Heart!
What God has linked no man shall dare to part;
And marriage is no whim of boyish blindness
To change as fortune changes—we were one;
And a wife's duty changes with our kindness,
As flowers take colour from the shade or sun.
She was no cultured woman, pure as snow
Through patience to resist;
She changed when I changed, and 'twas I, I know,
Who put the poison in the lips I kissed.

She watched me, day and night,
With a blanch'd bitterness upon her face;
A darkness veiled her in that marriage place
Which gave her privilege to hold me base
When it became unlovely in my sight:
For women, when their use is undiscerned,
Are spat upon and spurned.
She watched me in the darkness and the light,
With a scared anger like a wild affright.
I lied against the love for which I yearned;

I saw no mission, blind with wretchedness,
In her held the right
To be my mistress—
Who claimed her share of all my woe or bliss.
I crushed all duty by ignoring this.

One night, when all was still, she stood beside me,
Pale as my thoughts, with eyes that looked away
The dying friendship of our marriage day,
And bitterly defied me.
Gross words were hers, that only hurt and soil
The mind from which they come;
Words of mind rough-hewn in petty toil,
Yet with a meaning in them. I was dumb.
But when she stained the name of that young maid,
That dwelling-place for sunshine where I played,
Like some glad boy, and pleased a heart grown cold,
I spake out fierce and bold,
With bitter phrases better left unsaid.
I was as innocent as Faith in this:
The pretty maiden, to my sober mind,
Was like a pleasant thought of buried bliss,
A memory of sweetness left behind,
A sense of something lovely gone before,
A gentle friend too soon to be forgot,
Who made me gay because I loved her not,
Nor dreamed of loving—this and nothing more.
So angry speech was mine, and swift as thought,
Words that stung back upon my lips and died,
Perchance more pitiless because I sought
To justify the bitterness of thought
Which came between the woman and my pride.
She laughed a homeless laugh without a tear,
And as she left my side
There was a list'ning malice in her sneer.

What demon urged me on to mock and dare her,
To wound the snake that then began to stir?
To coin a paltry show of scorn for her,
And love for one face fairer,
To taunt her with the bitterness I bare her?
My blood no longer flowed with pulses cool;
I gave the woman whose hard hands had been
Toiling to teach me how to think her mean,
The right to scorn me and to hate me. Fool!
And if I talked to that sweet friend, whenever
My wedded wife was near,
The selfish demon in me would rejoice,
And put a softer pathos in my voice
That she might vindicate her scorn, and hear.
She watched us, sitting silently apart,
With cruel eyes, and eyebrows knitted down;
The bright blood gushing upward from the heart
Blackened about her frown.

Fair winds of incense blew the good ship home,
Through green sea shades from many a pleasant
clime,
And little snowy showers of ocean-foam;
And in the evening time
We home-sick voyagers would stand in knots,
And gaze towards the west with eager eyes,
While, one by one, the stars in quiet skies
Opened in light, like heaven's forget-me-nots.
And sometimes, leaning downward o'er the waves,
Deep without end and blind to human sight,
I seemed to see the shipwreck'd in their graves
Of soundless purple shadows flaked with light;
Green gardens of the depths, so hush'd and fair,
Still as a heart-beat, dumb without a sound,
Where pipy sea-weeds scatter gems around
The faces of the drowned,
Cold, with the freezing ooze amid their hair.

We slept. It was a pleasant night of June;
The sea that sighed around, was still and sweet;
And leaning dusky down in heaven, the moon
Sucked the pale billows to her silver feet.
We slept, or seemed to sleep, for all was calm,
And in our slumbers heard the waters croon
With musical motion, like a village psalm
Heard when blue distance drowns the sober tune;
My wedded wife was in my visions deep,
A bitter stony face
That seemed to haunt me on from place to place,
And as I wandered in the dark of sleep,
Her fiftful footsteps faltered on my track,
Through shadows where I heard the lost one weep,
And echoed at my back.

I started with a cry,
And strained towards the darkness eager-eyed;
A shudder at my side
Quickened my pulses, then a sobbing sigh.
My heart thronged hotly through the blood and brain
Till silence seemed a portion of its pain.
I stretched out hands and gazed along the night;
I caught the glimmer of a fluttering gown,
Which as I touched it rustled out of sight,
When something, with a face as deadly white
As dead men's faces floating fathoms down,
Turned, trembling from me in a cold affright,
The wedded woman with her eyes of light
Frozen to terror in the act to frown!

Then, as I gazed and tried in vain to speak,
From some far corner of the ship I heard
A cry of wonder and a smothered shriek,
At which the brooding silence shook and stirred.
There came a busy hum of voices, then
The whispered words and heavy tramp of men,
And a low murmuring as from underground;
And as the moon crept in upon the place
The lips were parted on the ghastly face
That looked a list'ning horror at the sound.
The wondering sleepers stirred with waking sighs,
With terror-stricken eyes
Gazed askingly around.
The woman shuddered from me with a cry,
Blanched with the stifling sense of some despair,
With a wild look that lifted up my hair,
And, in a wild impalpable terror, I
Rushed upward to the air.
Oh, what a horror shut my pulses there!

On the dim deck I stood, as pale as snow.
From the dark centre of the ship there came
A blackened mist of smoke, and down below
A flood of hissing flame,
That like a living thing rushed to and fro,
And grasped the crackling wood with murmurs dire.
"FIRE!"
Shrieked one, in mingled horror and surprise;
And higher yet and higher
The demon surged towards the moonlit skies,
With fiery arms and eyes,
Grasping the deck with sobs, and shrieks, and sighs.
FIRE! Men and women rose in wild affright
To glut their stifled senses with the sight.
Pale mothers with their babes, and men, and boys,
As pale as phantoms from the drowned dead,
While the calm master with his guiding voice
Led the pale seamen, as the waves were shed
Upon the demon's head!
Blind with our terror round the flames we stood,
In a pale cloud of smoke and hissing steam,
Like shapes in some dark dream,
With muttered prayers for good,

And faces icy pale;
 A newly risen wind
 Moaned mournfully behind,
 Dragged up the shuddering demon by the hair,
 Then crushed him backward to his smoky lair,
 And shrieked in shroud and sail.
 Higher, higher, higher, higher,
 Panting and shrieking, clomb the fiend of Fire;
 Until the radiance of the moon was drowned,
 And the red light with breath of furnace heat
 Now ghastly illumed us head to feet,
 Now with a smoky blackness wrapt us round.
 Then ever and anon with smothered cries,
 With waving arms and blood-red eyes,
 The fiend fell fainting with a softer sound,
 And in a pause as still and calm as death
 We heard the ocean moan with quiet breath,
 Until the demon-shape was up again,
 Shrieking like one in pain,
 And the quick heart seemed throbbing in the brain.
 Fire!—fire!—fire!—fire!
 The waters struggled with its strength in vain!
 Fire!—fire!—fire!—fire!
 Cried men and women, going to and fro;
 But higher, higher, higher, higher, higher,
 Panting on cheeks still pale amid the glow,
 With clouds of flame that seemed to melt and grow—
 The raving fiend surged upward from his pyre
 At white heat down below.

Then, up and down the deck with shrieks and cries
 Ran women wringing hands—
 One, that sweet maid, whose eyes
 Mixed dust of gold with my heart's sinking sand—
 Some, leading little ones that sobbed in fright,
 And called them by tender piteous names;
 While men rushed here and there with faces white,
 And heaped the waves of ocean on the flames.
 But climbing higher, higher, higher,
 Panting in sobs and shrieks, and with a power
 Increasing with the minutes of the hour,
 The fiend of Fire
 Scattered his sparks above us in a shower.

I had forgot the woman in my fear,
 But now I saw her standing calmly near,
 Watching the dim red shadow of the light,
 Reflected up among the stars of night:
 The radiance fell like blood upon her face,
 And like a blood-red garment wrapt her frame,
 And in her silent horror I could trace
 The shadow of the sin I cannot name,
 The sin of that red throat
 Of death, whose mad remembrance haunts me yet,
 A bitter sorrow and a cruel aim.
 My limbs were struck to stone,
 A freezing ice was in my blood and bone,
 When on my terror struck a sudden cry
 To man the boats, and fly!

Her eye flashed back on mine, and ere she wist,
 I reached her side and took her by the wrist,
 And with my breath upon her eyes and hair
 I pointed, speechless, to the furnace-flare,
 The radiant cavern where
 Th' unconquerable demon shrieked and hissed;
 All then was silent, and she might have heard
 My aching heart (although I spake no word)
 Beat thick towards the lips I once had kissed.
 Her sin was palpable in that huge dread
 Which made her crouch before me,
 And she was silent as a corpse whose fled
 Soul might be moaning in the brightness o'er me;
 Yet gazing on her with a heart fall'n dead,
 I seemed to pity her for the hate she bore me.

And thus we stood together, while the Fire
 Seethed round about in jets of lurid light,
 And ever climbing higher, higher, higher,
 Ate at the heart of Night.

"Forward!" the Master cried:
 The boats were tossing at the lost ship's side,
 Full of dark shapes of men and women frail,
 With utter fear grown dumb,
 And dread of something terrible to come,
 With the red light upon their faces pale.

I started from my trance in pain and wonder,
 And, dropping to a full frail boat, forgot
 The sinful woman whom I pitied not,
 What time a sound like groaning distant thunder
 Threatened to rend the burning ship asunder.
 "Off!" cried the Master, and we swung away,
 Rising and falling with the waves of ocean,
 Surging from side to side with even motion,
 Amid a slender mist of salt sea-spray.
 We pulled with willing heart and willing mind,
 While words of cheer passed on from lip to lip,
 And every eye looked backward on the ship
 Flaming along before a steady wind.

Then I again was 'ware
 Of the pale woman, sitting by me there,
 And gazing, as before, with quiet eyes
 At the ship's shadow flaming in the skies,
 Blind to all other sorrow, hope, or care.

A burning beacon on the sighing sea,
 The ship swept on beneath the stars and moon,
 That quiet night of June;
 And when the light itself was lost to me,
 And the sweet stars were seen again, like Love,
 I followed those despairing eyes with mine,
 And saw the moving shadow dusky shine
 Still in the mists of moonlight up above.
 Then o'er the long sea-wave
 A sudden murmur came,

The shade died out in one bright jet of flame—
 The ship had fallen to its homeless grave.
 But still my wedded wife was at my side,
 Gazing on heaven, pale and eager-eyed,
 Lost to the sense of hope no love could save.
 I murmured in my heart:

"If Heaven shall spare my life, so I her shame:
 But she shall part for ever with my name,
 And we will dwell apart."

And, looking on her woe, I said again:
 "The punishment is God's, and ours the pain;
 The sin is hers and mine, though hers the deed
 That choked our dreams of heaven while we slept;
 This tongue which made her love me in my need
 Shall never sting her bosom till it bleed—
 For I have sinned against her." And I wept.

The orange dawn broke in the east at last,
 And kindling into wider crimson shone
 On faces blanched with danger not yet passed,
 And two frail boats upon the sea alone;
 And scarce a word was spoken,
 But though our tongues were silent we were
 praying,

Each knew the prayer his neighbour's heart was
 saying,

And in the calm unbroken

Each sought another's glances as a token.

Then spake the Master words of hearty cheer,
 That Spanish ground, or else he erred, was near,
 And with a pause of joy,

We travellers, woman, man, and boy,

Then prayed aloud with many a thankful tear.

And thus the boats sailed swiftly on together,
 Straining with sail and oar

Towards the Spanish shore,
Asleep in sunny folds of summer weather.

Then came the quiet eve,
And stars stole out again like thoughts of home;
Rising and falling, wet with flying foam,
We almost ceased to grieve.
The silver twilight came like quiet rest,
And I was thinking of the buried wreck,
When Wife came creeping up against my breast,
And twined her long warm arms about my neck,
And laid her cheek to mine with love unblest.
And thrice I thrust her from me, but in vain;
She panted trembling to my arms again,
With kisses that seemed burning in my brain;
And so at last I yielded, and she clung
About me, breathing breath that scorched and stung;
My heart was hard and pitiless with pain.
Then as she watched me with her piteous eyes,
Robbed of her scorn and hate, and full of sighs,
While I was thinking of the marriage vow,
That still would hide the blackness on my brow,
"See!" cried a seaman—"comrade, see—she dies!"
I gazed upon her, as she trembled there
Upon my bosom, with a heart that bled;
Her toil-worn hand was smoothing back my hair,
And the old scorn seemed fled.
Then she, with cheek and hands grown cold as snow,
Crept closer to me, murmuring soft and low,
Half to herself, her breath on eyes and head,
In her new friendship looking very fair,
"Forgive me!" and "Forgive me!"—and I said,
"May God forgive thee, woman!" unaware.
Then one cried out aloud, that she was dead.

My tale is almost told.
Enough to know all touched the shore, worn out
With bitter fear and agonising doubt,
Bearing one dead—a woman, stiff and cold.
And when I laid her underneath the sod,
Close by the singing sea,
I half believed that I had loved her.—God
Forgive the wounded wife, and pardon me!
She was the sinner and the punished too;
And now that I am old and grey, I find
That she, and not the shallow maiden, drew
My footsteps closer unto humankind.
Perchance she perished, as she sinned, to win
Some gleams of better wisdom to my sight;
Perchance her love was greater than the sin
That threatened death that night!

A DAY'S RIDE: A LIFE'S ROMANCE.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

I COULD not hear the loud and repeated knockings which were made at my door, as at first waiters, and then the landlord himself, endeavoured to gain admittance. At length, a ladder was placed at the window, and a courageous individual, duly armed, appeared at my casement and summoned me to surrender. With what unspeakable relief did I learn that it was not to apprehend or arrest me that all these measures were taken; they were simply the promptings of a graceful benevolence, a sort of rumoured intimation having got about that, I had taken prussic acid, or was being done to death by charcoal. Imagine a prisoner in a condemned cell suddenly awakened, and hearing that the crowd around him consisted not of the ordinary, the sheriff, Mr. Calcraft and Co., but a deputation of respectable citizens come to offer the re-

presentation of their borough or a piece of plate, and then you can have a mild conception of the pleasant revulsion of my feelings. I thanked my public in a short but appropriate address. I assured them, although there was a popular prejudice about doing this sort of thing in November in England, that it was deemed quite unseasonable at other times, and that really in these days of domestic arsenic and conjugal strychnine, nothing but an unreasonable impatience would make a man self-destructive—suicide arguing that as man was really so utterly valueless it was worth nobody's while to get rid of him. My explanation over, I ordered breakfast.

"Why not dinner?" said the waiter. "It is close on four o'clock."

"No," said I; "the ladies will expect me at dinner."

"The ladies are near Constance by this, or else the roads are worse than we thought them."

"Near Constance! Do you mean to say they have gone?"

"Yes, sir, at daybreak; or, indeed, I might say before daybreak."

"Gone! actually gone?" was all that I could utter.

"They never went to bed last night, sir; the old lady was taken very ill after tea, and all the house running here and there for doctors and remedies, and the young lady, though she bore up so well, they tell me she fainted when she was alone in her own room. In fact, it was a piece of confusion and trouble until they started, and we may say, none of us had a moment's peace till we saw them off."

"And how came it that I was never called?"

"I believe, sir, but I'm not sure, the landlord tried to awake you. At all events, he has a note for you now, for I saw the old lady place it in his hand."

"Fetch it at once," said I; and when he left the room, I threw some water over my face, and tried to rally all my faculties to meet the occasion.

When the waiter reappeared with the note, I bade him leave it on the table; I could not venture to read it while he was in the room. At length he went away, and I opened it. These were the contents:

"SIR,—When a personage of your rank abuses the privilege of his station, it is supposed that he means to rebuke. Although innocent of any cause for your displeasure, I have preferred to withdraw myself from your notice than incur the chance of so severe a reprimand a second time.

"I am, sir, with unfeigned sorrow and humility, your most devoted follower and servant,

"To the — de —."

"MARTHA KEATS.

This was the whole of it; not a great deal as correspondence, but matter enough for much thought and much misery. After a long and painful review of my conduct, one startling fact

stood prominently forward, which was, that I had done something which, had it been the act of a royal prince, would yet have been unpardonable, but which, if known to emanate from one such as myself, would have been a downright outrage.

I went into the whole case, as a man who detests figures might have gone into a long and complicated account; and just as he would skip small sums, and pay little heed to fractions, I aimed at arriving at some grand solid balance for or against myself.

I felt, that if asked to produce my books, they might run this wise: Potts, on the credit side, a philanthropist, self-denying, generous, and trustful; one eager to do good, thinking no evil of his neighbour, hopeful of everybody, anxious to establish that brotherhood amongst men which, however varied the station, could and ought to subsist, and which needs but the connecting link of one sympathetic existence to establish. On the other side, Potts, I grieve to say, appeared that which Ferdinand Mendez Pinto was said to be.

When I had rallied a bit from the stunning effect of this disagreeable "total," I began to wish that I had somebody to argue the matter out with me. The way I would put my case would be thus: "Has not—from the time of Quintus Curtius down to the late Mr. Sadleir, of banking celebrity—the sacrifice of one man for the benefit of his fellows been recognised as the noblest exposition of heroism? Now, although it is much to give up life for the advantage of others, it is far more to surrender one's identity, to abandon that grand capital Ego! which gives a man his self-esteem and suggests his self-preservation. And who, I would ask, does this so thoroughly as the man who everlastingly palms himself upon the world for that which he is not? According to the greatest happiness principle, this man may be a real boon to humanity. He feeds this one with hope, the other with flattery; he bestows courage on the weak, confidence on the wavering. The rich man can give of his abundance, but it is out of his very poverty this poor fellow has to bestow all. Like the spider, he has to weave his web from his own vitals, and like the same spider he may be swept away by some pretentious affectation of propriety."

While I thus argued, the waiter came in to serve dinner. It looked all appetising and nice; but I could not touch a morsel. I was sick at heart; Kate Herbert's last look as she quitted the room was ever before me. Those dark grey eyes—which you stupid folk will go on calling blue—have a sort of reproachful power in them very remarkable. They don't flash out in anger like black eyes, or sparkle in fierceness like hazel; but they emit a sort of steady, fixed, concentrated light, that seems to imply that they have looked thoroughly into you, and come back very sad and very sorry for the inquiry. I thought of the happy days I had passed beside her; I recalled her low and gentle voice, her sweet half sad smile, and her playful laugh, and

I said, "Have I lost all these for ever, and how? What stupid folly possessed me last evening? How could I have been so idiotic as not to see that I was committing the rankest of all enormities? How should I, in my insignificance, dare to assail the barriers and defences which civilisation has established, and guards amongst its best prerogatives? Was this old buffoon, was this piece of tawdry fringe and spangles, a fitting company for that fair and gentle girl? How artistically false, too, was the position I had taken. Interweaving into my ideal life these coarse realities, was the same sort of outrage as shocks one in some of the Venetian churches, where a lovely Madonna, the work of a great hand, may be seen bedizened and disfigured with precious stones over her drapery. In this was I violating the whole poetry of my existence. These figures were as much out of keeping as would be a couple of Ostade's Boors in a grand Scripture piece by Domenichino.

"And yet, Potts," thought I, "they were really living creatures. They had hearts for joy and sorrow and hope and the rest of it. They were pilgrims travelling the self-same road as you were. They were not illusions, but flesh and blood folk, that would shiver when cold, and die of hunger if starved. Were they not then, as such, of more account than all your mere imaginings? would not the least of their daily miseries outweigh a whole bushel of fancied sorrow? and is it not a poor selfishness on your part, when you deem some airy conception of your brain of more account than that poor old man and that dark-eyed girl. Last of all, are they not, in all their ragged finery, more 'really true men' than you yourself, Potts, living in a maze of delusions? They only act when the sawdust is raked and the lamps are lighted; but you are 'en scène' from dawn to dark, and only lay down one motley to don another. Is not this wretched? Is it not ignoble? In all these changes of character, how much of the real man will be left behind? Will there be one morsel of honest flesh when all the lacquer of paint is washed off? And was it—oh, was it for this you first adventured out on the wide ocean of life?"

I passed the evening and a great part of the night in such self-accusings, and then I addressed myself to action. I bethought me of my future, and with whom and where and how it might be passed. The bag of money entrusted to me by the minister to pay the charges of the road was hanging where I had placed it—on the curtain-holder. I opened it, and found a hundred and forty gold Napoleons, and some ten or twelve pounds in silver. I next set to count over my own especial hoard; it was a fraction under a thousand francs. Forty pounds was truly a very small sum wherewith to confront a world to which I brought not any art, or trade, or means of livelihood; I say forty, because I had not the shadow of a pretext for touching the other sum, and I resolved at once to transmit it to the owner. Now, what could be done with so humble a capital? I had heard of a great

general who once pawned a valuable sword—a sword of honour it was—wherewith to buy a horse, and so mounted, he went forth over the Alps and conquered a kingdom. The story had no moral for me, for somehow I did not feel as though I were the stuff that conquers kingdoms, and yet there must surely be a vast number of men in life with about the same sort of faculties, merits, and demerits, as I have. There must be a numerous Potts family in every land, well-meaning, right-intentioned, worthless creatures, who, out of a supposed willingness to do anything, always end by doing nothing. Such people, it must be inferred, live upon what are called their wits, or, in other words, trade upon the daily accidents of life, and the use to which they can turn the traits of those they meet with.

I was resolved not to descend to this; no, I had determined to say adieu to all masquerading, and be simply Potts, the druggist's son, one who had once dreamed of great ambitions, but had taken the wrong road to them. I would from this hour be an honest, truth-speaking, simple-hearted creature. What the world might henceforth accord me of its sympathy should be tendered on honest grounds; nay, more, in the spirit of those devotees who inspire themselves with piety by privations, I resolved on a course of self-mortification, I would not rest till I had made my former self expiate all the vainglorious wantonness of the past, and pay in severe penance for every transgression I had committed. I began boldly with my reformation. I sat down and wrote thus:

"To Mr. Dyer, Stephen's-green, Dublin.

"The gentleman who took away a dun pony from your livery stables in the month of May last, and who, from certain circumstances, has not been able to restore the animal, sends herewith twenty pounds as his probable value. If Mr. D. conscientiously considers the sum insufficient, the sender will at some future time, he hopes, make good the difference."

Doubtless my esteemed reader will say, at this place, "The fellow couldn't do less; he need not vaunt himself on a common-place act of honesty, which, after all, might have been suggested by certain fears of future consequences. His indiscretion amounted to horse-stealing, and horse-stealing is a felony."

All true, every word of it, most upright of judges; I was simply doing what I ought, or rather what I ought long since to have done. But now, let me ask, is this, after all, the invariable course in life, and is there no merit in doing what one ought when every temptation points to the other direction? and lastly, is it nothing to do what a man ought, when the doing costs exactly the half of all he has in the world?

Now, if I were, instead of being Potts, a certain great writer that we all know and delight in, I would improve the occasion here by asking my reader, does he always himself do the right thing? I would say to him, perhaps with

all haste to anticipate his answer, Of course you do. You never pinch your children, or kick your wife out of bed; you are a model father and a churchwarden; but I am only a poor apothecary's son, brought up in precepts of thrift and the Dublin Pharmacopœia; and I own to you, when I placed the half of my twenty-pound crisp clean bank-note inside of that letter, I felt I was figuratively cutting myself in two. But I did it "like a man," if that be a proper phrase for an act which I thought god-like. And oh, take my word for it, when a sacrifice hasn't cost you a coach-load of regrets, and a shopful of hesitations about making it, it is of little worth. There's a wide difference between the gift of a sheep from an Australian farmer, or the present of a child's pet lamb, even though the sheep be twice the size of the lamb.

I gave myself no small praise for what I had done, much figurative patting on the back, and a vast deal of that very ambiguous consolation which beggars in Catholic countries bestow in change for alms, by assurances that it will be remembered to you in Purgatory.

"Well," thought I, "the occasion isn't very far off, for my Purgatory begins to-morrow."

CHAPTER XXIX.

I WAS in a tourist locality, and easily provided myself with a light equipment for the road, resolved at once to take the footpath in life and "seek my fortune." I use these words simply as the expression of the utter uncertainty which prevailed as to whether I should go, and what do when I got there.

If there be few more joyous things in life than to start off on foot with three or four choice companions, to ramble through some fine country, rich in scenery, varied in character and interesting in story, there are few more lonely sensations than to set out by oneself, not very decided what way to take, and with very little money to take it.

One of the most grievous features of small means is, certainly, the almost exclusive occupation it gives the mind as to every, even the most trivial, incident that involves cost. Instead of dining on fish and fowl and fruit, you feel eating so many groschen and kreutzers. You are not drinking wine, your beverage is a solution of copper batzen in vinegar! When you poke the fire, every spark that flies up the chimney is a baiocco! You come at last to suspect that the sun won't warm you for nothing, and that the very breeze that cooled your brow is only waiting round the corner to ask "for something for himself."

When the rich man lives sparingly, the conscious power of the wealth he might employ if he pleased, sustains him. The poor fellow has no such consolation to fall back on; the closer his coat is examined, the more threadbare will it appear. If it were simply that he dressed humbly and fared coarsely, it might be borne well, but it is the hourly depreciation that poverty is exposed to, makes its true grievance. "An ill-looking"—this means, generally, ill-dressed—"an

ill-looking fellow had been seen about the premises at nightfall," says the police report. "A very suspicious character had asked for a bed; his wardrobe was in 'a spotted handkerchief.' The waiter remembers that a fellow, much travel-stained and weary, stopped at the door that evening and asked if there was any cheap house of entertainment in the village." Heaven help the poor wayfarer if any one has been robbed, any house broken into, any rick set fire to, while he passed through that locality. There is no need of a crowd of witnesses to convict him, since every bend in his hat, every tear in his coat, and every rent in his shoes, are evidence against him.

If I thought over these things in sorrow and humiliation, it was in a very proud spirit that I called to mind how, on that same morning, I deposited the bag with all the money in Messrs. Haber's bank, saw the contents duly counted over, replaced and sealed up, and then addressed to Her Majesty's Minister at Kalbratenstadt, taking a receipt for the same. "This was only just common honesty," says the reader. Oh, if there is an absurd collocation of words, it is that! Common honesty! why, there is nothing in this world so perfectly, so totally uncommon! Never, I beseech you, undervalue the waiter who restores the ring you dropped in the coffee-room; nor hold him cheaply who gives back the umbrella you left in the cab. These seem such easy things to do, but they are not easy. Men are more or less Cornish wreckers in life, and very apt to regard the lost article as a treasure-trove. I have said all this to you, amiable reader, that you may know what it cost me, on that same morning, not to be a rogue, and not to enrich myself with the goods of another.

I underwent a very long and searching self-examination to ascertain why it was I had not appropriated that bag, an offence which, legally speaking, would only amount to a breach of trust. I said, "Is it that you had no need of the money, Potts? Did you feel that your own means were ample enough? Was it that your philosophy had made you regard gold as mere dross, and then think that the load was a burden? Or, taking higher ground, had you recalled the first teachings of your venerable parent, that good man and careful apothecary, who had given you your first perceptions of right and wrong?" I fear that I was obliged to say No, in turn, to each of these queries. I would have been very glad to be right, proud to have been a philosopher, overjoyed to feel myself swayed by moral motives, but I could not palm the imposition on my conscience, and had honestly to own that the real reason of my conduct was—I was in love! There was the whole of it!

There was an old sultan once so impressed with an ill notion of the sex, that whenever a tale of misfortune or disgrace reached him, his only inquiry as to the source of the evil was, Who was she? Now, my experiences of life have travelled in another direction, and whenever I read of some noble piece of heroism, or some daring act of self-devotion, I don't ask

whether he got the Bath or the Victoria Cross, if he were made a governor here, or a vice-governor there, but who was She that prompted this glorious deed? I'd like to know all about her: the colour of her eyes, her hair; was she slender or plump, was she fiery or gentle; was it an old attachment or an acute attack coming after a paroxysm at first sight?

If I were the great chief of some great public department where all my subordinates were obliged to give heavy security for their honesty, I would neither ask for bail bonds or sureties, but I'd say, "Have you got a wife, or a sweetheart? either will do. Let me look at her. If she be worthy an honest man's love, I am satisfied; mount your high stool and write away."

Oh, how I longed to stand aright in that dear girl's eyes, that she should see me worthy of her! Had she yielded to all my wayward notions and rambling opinions, giving way either in careless indolence or out of inability to dispute them, she had never made the deep impression on my heart. It was because she had bravely asserted her own independence, never conceding where unconvinced, never yielding where unvanquished, that I loved her. What a stupid reverie was that of mine when I fancied her one of those strong-minded, determined women—a thickly-shod, umbrella-carrying female, who can travel alone and pass her trunk through a custom-house. No, she was delicate, timid, and gentle; there was no over-confidence in her, nor the slightest pretension. Rule me? not a bit of it. Guide, direct, support, confirm, sustain me; elevate my sentiments, cheer me on my road in life, making all evil odious in my eyes, and the good to seem better!

I verily believe, with such a woman, an humble condition in life offers more chances of happiness than a state of wealth and splendour. If the best prizes of life are to be picked up around a man's fireside, moderate means, conducing as they do to a home life, would point more certainly to these than all the splendour of grand receptions. If I were, say, a village doctor, a schoolmaster; if I were able to eke out subsistence in some occupation, whose pursuit might place me sufficiently favourably in her eyes. I don't like grocery, for instance, or even "dry goods," but something—it's no fault of mine if the English language be cramped and limited, and that I must employ the odious word "genteel" but it conveys, in a fashion, all that I aim at.

I began to think how this was to be done. I might return to my own country, go back to Dublin, and become Potts and Son—at least son! A very horrid thought, and very hard to adopt.

I might take a German degree in physic, and become an English doctor, say, at Baden, Ems, Geneva, or some other resort of my countrymen on the Continent. I might give lectures, I scarcely well knew on what, still less to whom; or I could start as Professor Potts, and instruct foreigners in Shakespeare. There were at least "three courses" open to me; and to consider

them the better, I filled my pipe, and strolled off the high road into a shady copse of fine beech-trees, at the foot of one of which, and close to a clear little rivulet, I threw myself at full length, and thus, like Tityrus, enjoyed the leafy shade, making my meerschaum do duty for the shepherd's reed.

I had not been long thus, when I heard the footsteps of some persons on the road, and shortly after, the sound discontinuing, I judged that they must have crossed into the sward beneath the wood. As I listened, I detected voices, and the next moment two figures emerged from the cover and stood before me: they were Vaterchen and Tintefleek.

"Sit down," said I, pointing to each in turn to take a place at either side of me. They had, it is true, been the cause of the great calamity of my life, but in no sense was the fault theirs, and I wished to show that I was generous and open-minded. Vaterchen acceded to my repeated invitation with a courteous humility, and seated himself at a little distance off; but Tintefleek threw herself on the grass, and with such a careless "abandon," that her hair escaped from the net that held it, and fell in great wavy masses across my feet.

"Ay," thought I, as I looked at the graceful outlines of her finely-shaped figure, "here is the Amaryllis come to complete the tableau; only I would wish fewer spangles, and a little more simplicity."

I saw that it was necessary to reassure Vaterchen as to my perfect sanity by some explanation as to my strange mode of travelling, and told him briefly, "that it was a caprice common enough with my countrymen to assume the knapsack, and take the road on foot; that we fancied in this wise we obtained a nearer view of life, and at least gained companionship with many from whom the accident of station might exclude us." I said this with an artful delicacy, meant to imply that I was pointing at a very great and valuable privilege of pedestrianism.

He smiled with a sad, a very sad expression on his features, and said, "But in what wise, highly honoured sir?"—he addressed me always as *Hoch Ge-ehrter Herr*—"could you promise to yourself advantage from such associations as these? I cannot believe you would condescend to know us simply to carry away in memory the little traits that must needs distinguish such lives as ours. I would not insult my respect for you by supposing that you come amongst us to note the absurd contrast between our real wretchedness and our mock gaiety; and yet what else is there to gain? What can the poor mountebank teach you beyond this?"

"Much," said I, with fervour, as I grasped his hand, and shook it heartily; "much, if you only gave me this one lesson that I now listen to, and I learn that a man's heart can beat as truthfully under motley as under the embroidered coat of a minister. The man who speaks as you do, can teach me much."

He gave a short but heavy sigh, and turned

away his head. He arose after a few minutes, and going gently across the grass, spread his handkerchief over the head and face of the girl, who had at once fallen into a deep sleep.

"Poor thing," muttered he, "it is well she can sleep! She has eaten nothing to-day!"

"But, surely," said I, "there is some village or some wayside inn near this——"

"Yes, there is the Eckstein, a little public about two miles further; but we didn't care to reach it before nightfall. It is so painful to pass many hours in a place and never call for anything; one is ill looked on, and uncomfortable from it; and as we have only what would pay for our supper and lodging, we thought we'd wear away the noon in the forest here, and arrive at the inn by close of day."

"Let me be your travelling companion for to-day," said I, "and let us push forward and have our dinner together. Yes, yes, there is far less of condescension in the offer than you suspect. I am neither great nor milord, I am one of a class like your own, Vaterchen, and what I do for you to-day some one else will as probably do for me to-morrow."

Say what I could, the old man would persist in believing that this was only another of those eccentricities for which Englishmen are famed; and though, with the tact of a native good breeding, he showed no persistence in opposition, I saw plainly enough that he was unconvinced by all my arguments.

While the girl slept, I asked him how he chanced upon the choice of his present mode of life, since there were many things in his tone and manner that struck me as strangely unlike what I should have ascribed to his order.

"It is a very short story," said he; "five minutes will tell it, otherwise I might scruple to impose on your patience. It was thus I became what you see me."

Short as the narrative was, I must keep it for another page.

BOXING-DAY.

MR. SKINNER STONE presents his respectful compliments to the Editor of *All the Year Round*, and begs to lay before him a statement of certain circumstances in connexion with the present season of the year which have come under his observation, together with the inferences which he has been enabled to deduce from the same.

The residence of your informant is at the end of a certain row of stuccoed houses in the postal district N.W. The house is not in a line with the other houses in Lumbago-terrace. It is situated at the eastern extremity of that stronghold of miasma, and projects from the other clammy and exudacious tenements.

Lumbago-terrace is a fair specimen of the architecture of Corinth, as adapted to the necessities of our age and habits. It is well known that the great glare and blaze of sunlight to which in this country we are perpetually subject, dazzles and scorches us during the major

portion of the year. The architect of Lumbago-terrace, therefore, "threw up" the great Corinthian façade in the centre of Lumbago-terrace, by which he succeeded in darkening the four centre houses of the row, letting into the drawing and dining rooms of the others the light of heaven. But he remedied this intolerable defect, by "throwing forward" a couple of massive corner buildings at each end of the terrace; themselves kept from the sun's glare by the centre pile, and immensely helping in their turn to overshadow the receding portions of the wings, and preserving them from the unendurable annoyance of the solar rays.

In one of the projecting extremities of the line of Lumbago-terrace, is situated the room in which your Informant ordinarily works at his History of Space. The window before which his desk is placed commands the whole extent of the terrace from end to end, and he is thus enabled to rake that row of houses completely, as from a tower of observation. It was on the morning after Christmas-day, then, that, seated at his desk before this window, his attention—which will sometimes wander to external things—was caught by certain phenomena, which he now proposes to describe.

A group, consisting of two tall men and a short one, all very seedy, enters the terrace at its western extremity, which is that farthest from the position occupied by your informant. The men, after loitering undecidedly for a short time in front of the last house (No. 20), separate; the two tall men advance to the house door, and knock a single knock, while the short man stands at the edge of the pavement, with his back to the others, and one foot projecting over the side of the kerbstone. He also chews a straw, and every now and then looks round furtively and uneasily, to see how his companions are getting on.

They are getting on particularly well, one would think. The door opens, and one of the men, taking a step forward, asserts a foot upon the mat, and speaks to the housemaid; the other man leans against the door-post; and the short man, on the kerbstone, examines the sky and the prospects of the weather, and tries to look as if he did not belong to the party. The door is now closed, and the man who stepped upon the mat, is shut in, while his mate remains upon the step, and in his turn becomes interested in the state of the weather; also in the condition of his nails; also in the paint upon the entrance pillars. Very suddenly, the door is again opened, and the man who had been enclosed drops out upon the steps, with an appearance of immense relief. Immediately upon this the short man gives up his fiction of not belonging to the party, and a secret conference takes place. This over, the party once more separate, and the two tall men ascend the steps of No. 19. Everything happens as before. No. 18 in like order. This routine is performed at every house. The only thing which is at all subject to change being the demeanour of the men when engaged in consultation; which sometimes leaves them

brisk and cheerful, but sometimes deeply and sulkily despondent.

If this first deputation was of a bewildering nature, what were the feelings of your informant when a second and a third group, each consisting of three seedy ones, appeared in Lumbago-terrace, and went through a series of performances precisely similar to those engaged in by the first comers. What! in every case three men; never more, never less; in every case two who did the work, and one who stood upon the kerbstone and ignored them while they did it? In every case a conference after each call? In every case that conference marked by great briskness or deep gloom and stagnation? In every case? No, not in every case—once, a clarionet, a trombone, and an ophicleide.

The deputation bearing these instruments threw a perfect blaze of light on the mystery. The waits! Christmas-boxes. These groups of diffident and embarrassed personages were composed of your regular dustmen, and your united scavengers, and your lamplighters embodied into a company (limited), and lastly, of your incorporated waits. The waits whom you hear at a distance as you come back from Christmas parties, and whom, gradually approaching as you walk home, you come upon suddenly under a lee-wall standing in such shelter as they can get, all looking different ways, with green baize instrument-wrappers over their arms, braying out their sad souls in bleak discordancy.

Oh, the waits, the cruel waits, are they worst far off or near? They sink your soul down when they play under your window. They go into the next street and sink it lower. Matters are no better when they get into the next street but one; and, when they have reached the square round the corner, and the notes of the trombone at intervals alone are audible, it is a great question whether you are not worse off still; whether your woes are not more aggravated than ever.

The waits were outside, expectant of a Christmas-box. The ophicleide had placed his instrument across an angle of the area railings appertaining to this writer's abode while he beat his breast to warm it; the trombone was on the mat in the passage; and the clarionet, with that cheery tube under his arm, was playing that important kerbstone part which it has been mentioned was discharged in every case of a Christmas-box application by one member of the corps.

After sending out a shilling to the trombone in the passage—who diffused so much cold that it was worth the money in fuel to get him promptly out of the house—that your Informant began to speculate on the question whether the Christmas-box system does not, in some of its aspects, partake of the nature of a nuisance. He endeavoured to avoid the subject, but it pursued him, go where he would.

That night, and the next, and the next after, as the writer was returning home, he happened to observe a general tendency in certain seedy individuals to oscillate in their walk,

to regard passers-by with a fixed and vitreous gaze, to enter into long explanations not remarkable for clearness, to give a wide berth to drinking-fountains, and sometimes to do obeisance, even in the mud, before objects not ordinarily associated with worship, such as lamp-posts, gin-shop doors, coal plates, and the like. Your Informant observed, also, an affectionate disposition on the part of such of these persons as were husbands and fathers to lean caressingly on their wives, and even on children of tender years, teaching them thus a moral lesson of the necessity there might be for them to support their parents in the decline of life. He observed, too, that these husbands and fathers were prone in some instances to shed tears, in others to cheer with laughter and merry jests those who were accompanying them; whilst others were moved, in their desire to improve the training of their families, to such stern censure of their faults as would sometimes lead them to administer correction, with some violence, in the public streets. There were some individuals who maintained a dignified silence, and steadily refused to yield to the urgent entreaties of those who desired (most unaccountably) their return home. Some, too, when more specially urged by government authorities to advance one way or the other, would hold firmly to iron railings, or to corners of gateways, or would sit down upon damp pavements, rather than alter a determination once taken, or yield to importunity, in a case where the judgment was unconvinced.

Now, putting all the things together, and having it further forced upon his mind that in many instances the individuals whose singularities have just been developed were generally similar in appearance, costume, and all other respects to those whose conduct had attracted his attention in the morning in Lumbago-terrace, it did at last occur to your Informant—especially after recognising a gentleman who was beating his wife with a trombone as the artist who had called in behalf of the waits in the morning—it did occur to the writer at last, to ask himself whether, perchance, there was any connexion between the Christmas-boxes of the morning and the eccentric behaviour of their recipients in the evening; whether, again, that eccentric behaviour was in any degree attributable to a misuse of strong waters; and once more, whether the Christmas-box system altogether was or was not, in this respect, a nuisance?

Your Informant has no objection to voluntary "tips," but to mendicancy he has a great objection, and is inclined to think that gratuities should be gratuitously given, and not be extorted by importunity from unwilling donors. Christmas-time is a good season for liberality and judicious almsgiving, and were the money annually expended in this country in Christmas-boxes collected for some benevolent object, the sum would be of such magnitude as to provide the means of carrying out some great national work of philanthropy, and perhaps also it might happen that this

money, being diverted into other and worthier channels, the annual return of Christmas might be attended by a lessened display of drunkenness in our public streets.

THE FAMILY AT FENHOUSE.

I was to be a governess; but I could not obtain a situation. My poor mother had been insane for many years before her death; one of my brothers was deaf and dumb, another was deformed, while none of us showed either health or vigour. In a word, there was no escaping the fact that we had the seeds of some terrible disease sown thickly among us, and that, as a family, we were unhealthy and unsafe. I was the eldest and the strongest, both in mind and body, but that was not saying much. I was always what I am now, tall and gaunt, with the spasmodic affection which you see in my face, as nervous as I am now, and nearly as thin; short-sighted, which made my manners doubly awkward, and they would always have been awkward from my nervousness and ungainly figure; and with an unnaturally acute hearing, often followed by attacks of unconsciousness, which sometimes lasted many hours, and rendered me, for the time, dead to all outward life.

Unpromising as our family condition was, when my father died and left us destitute, it was absolutely necessary that those of us at all capable should get something to do, and that the rest should be cared for by charity. The last we found more easy to be accomplished than the first. Many kind hands were stretched forward to help the helpless of us, but few to strengthen the weak. However, after a time, they were all settled in some way or other, and were at least secured from starvation, while I, who had been considered the most hopeful, was still unprovided for, looking vainly for a situation either as governess or companion. Both were equally difficult to procure. On the one side my manners and appearance were against me, on the other, my family history. As I could not deny my inheritance of disease and insanity, mothers, naturally enough, would not trust me with their children, and I was not sufficiently attractive for a companion. People who can afford companions want something pliant, bright, animated, pleasant. No one would look at my unlovely face, or hear the harsh tones of my voice—I know how harsh they are—and pay me to be an ornament or pleasure to their lives. So, as I tell you, I was refused by every one, until I began to despair of success, and without blaming any, to understand that the world was too hard for me, and that I had no portion in it.

As my last venture, I answered an advertisement in the Times for a companion to a lady in delicate health, living in the country. My letter was replied to in a bold manly hand, and a meeting arranged. I was to go down that next day by train to a place about twenty miles from London, and find my way from a certain

railway station named, two miles across the country—conveyances not to be had—to a village called Fenhouse-green. A mile farther would bring me to Fenhouse itself, "the seat of Mr. and Mrs. Brand." The note was couched in a curiously sharp, peremptory style, and pompously worded. I remember, too, that it was written on a broad sheet of coarse letter paper, and sealed with what looked at first sight to be a large coat of arms, but which, when examined, proved to be only a make-believe. With my habit of making up histories out of every incident that came before me, I decided that the writer was a military man, wealthy and high born; and that, about to leave on foreign service, he wished to place his young and beautiful wife in careful hands so as to ensure her pleasant companionship during his absence. I made quite a romance out of that peremptory letter with its broad margin and imposing seal.

"They will never take me when they have seen me!" I sighed, as I settled myself in the third-class carriage which I shared with three soldiers' wives and a couple of Irish labourers, and I wished that I could have exchanged my fate and person with the meanest among them. Though they were poor, they were not under a curse, as I was; though man had not uplifted them, Fortune had not crushed them as she had crushed me. I was weeping bitterly behind my veil, overpowered with my own sadness and despair, and almost decided on not going farther to meet only with fresh disappointment, when the train stopped at my station, and I let myself drift down the tide of circumstance, and once more dared my chance.

Asking my way to Fenhouse-green, much to the astonishment, apparently, of the solitary station-master, I struck into a rugged by-road, which he said would take me there. The two miles' walk seemed as if it would never end. The road was lonely, and the country desolate, ugly, and monotonous; nothing but a broad ragged waste, without a tree or an autumn flower to break the dead dreariness of the scene. I did not meet a living creature until I came to an unwholesome-looking collection of cottages, covered with foul eruptions of fungi and mildew starting out like a leprosy upon the walls. Where the village-green should have been, was a swamp, matted with *confervæ*. It was a place to remember in one's dreams, from the neglect and desolation, the hopeless poverty and feverish squalor of all about.

If this was the village of which the writer had spoken so pompously as his property, and of which I had imagined all that was charming and picturesque, it did not argue much for what had to come; and I began to feel that I had painted too brightly, and, perhaps, had ranked my chance too low. The place frightened me. I went through, glad to escape the stupid wonder of the pallid women and children who came crowding to the doors, as though a stranger were a rare and not too welcome sight among them. Indeed, some seemed to have a

kind of warning terror in their looks when they pointed in the direction of the House, as they called it; and one old witch, lifting her stick, cried, "Surely, surely, not there belike!" in a tone which froze my blood. However, it was too late now to recede; so, full of an indescribable terror, I went on my way, until I arrived at Fenhouse, where my future was to lie.

It was a lonely house, standing back from the road, completely shut in, in front, by a tangled shrubbery, while at the rear stretched a close dark wood with a trailing undergrowth of briars and thorns. The gate hung broken, supported by one hinge only; the garden was a mass of weeds and rubbish; the flower-beds overgrown with grass and nettles; and what had once been rose-trees and flowering shrubs, left to wither and die, stifled by bindweed and coarser growths. The house was of moderate size, two-storied, and roomy, but so neglected and uncared for, that it looked more bleakly desolate than anything I had ever seen before. My dream of the young and beautiful wife had vanished, and I felt as if about to be ushered into the presence of some fantastic horror or deadly crime. The wet leaves plashed beneath my feet, and sent up their clouds of autumn odour—the odour of death; unsightly insects and loathsome reptiles glided before me with a strange familiarity, which rendered them yet more loathly; not a bird twittered through the naked branches of the trees. The whole place had a wild, weird, haunted look; and, shivering with dread at I knew not what, I rang the rusty bell, hanging lonely out of the chipped and broken socket. The peal startled me, and brought out a small terrier, which came running round me, barking furiously and shrilly. The door was opened by a ragged, slipshod servant-girl, and I was shown into a poorly-furnished room, which seemed to be a kind of library; to judge at least by the open bookcase, thinly stocked with shabby books. The room was close and musty; the fire in the grate was heaped up carefully towards the middle, and the sides blocked in by bricks. It was a mean fire: a stingy, shabby fire.

After waiting for some time, a gentleman and lady came in. She was a pale, weak, hopeless-looking woman, very tall, fair, and slender, with a narrow forehead, lustreless light blue eyes with no eyelashes, scanty hair, straw-coloured ill-defined eyebrows, and very thin pale lips. She was slightly deformed, and carried her arms thrust far back from the elbow, the hands left to dangle nervelessly from the wrists. She stooped, and was dressed in a limp faded cotton gown, every way too scanty and too cold for the season. When she came in, her eyes were bent towards the soiled grey carpet, and she never raised them, or made the least kind of salutation, but sat down on a chair near the window, and began to unravel a strip of muslin. The gentleman was short and thick-set, very active and determined-looking, with dark hair turning now to grey, a thick but evenly-cut moustache, joining his bushy whiskers, the large

square heavy chin left bare; overhanging eyebrows, with small, restless, passionate eyes beneath: in his whole face and bearing an expression of temper amounting to ferocity.

He spoke to me peremptorily and haughtily; asked me my name, age, family condition, previous history, as if he had been examining me on oath, scarcely waiting for my answers, and all the while fixing me with those small angry eyes till I felt dazed and restless, as creatures under torture. Then he said, abruptly:

"You have a strange look—a scared look, I may call it. How have you come by it?"

"I am of a nervous temperament, sir," I answered, pulling at the ends of my gloves.

"Nothing else? Nothing hereditary?"

"Yes, sir," said I, as steadily as I could; "there is hereditary misfortune among us."

"Father or mother?"

"Mother."

"Ah!" said the man, rubbing his moustache, and looking at me with eyes all a-flame; "so much the nearer and more dangerous."

"I am not dangerous," I said, a little too humbly, perhaps; but that man was completely subduing me. "I am nervous, but I have no worse tendency."

He laughed.

"Perhaps not," he said, with a sneer that made my blood curdle; "no one ever has. Don't you know that all maniacs are philosophers, when they are not kings and queens? Shall I take you on trust, then, according to your own estimate of yourself, or discharge you at once, according to mine?"

"I think I may be trusted, sir," I answered, looking everywhere but into his face.

"What do you think, Mrs. Brand?" he said, turning to the pale woman unravelling her strip of muslin, and who had not, as I thought, looked at me once yet.

"She is ugly," said she, in a dull, monotonous voice; "I don't like ugly people."

Mr. Brand laughed again.

"Never mind that, Mrs. Brand; goodness don't go by looks, does it Miss—Miss what? Are you a name or a number?"

"Miss Erfurt."

"Oh yes! I forgot—Jane Erfurt—I remember now, and a queer name it is, too. Does it, Miss Jane Erfurt?"

"Not always, sir," I said, moving restlessly.

"Well, Mrs. Brand, what do you say?"

"She is ugly, and George will not like her," said the lady, in the same half-alive manner.

"Who the deuce cares!" shouted Mr. Brand, flaming with passion on the instant. "Let him like it or not, who cares for a stupid fool, or for what he thinks? That, for his liking!" snapping his fingers insolently.

The lady's face grew a shade paler; but, beyond a furtive, terrified glance at her husband, she took no notice of his words. He then turned abruptly to me, and told me that I was to hold myself engaged to perform the duties of companion to Mrs. Brand, and that I was to enter on those duties early next week.

"But without the lady's consent?" said I, too weak to resist, and too nervous to accept.

She put away her muslin and rose. "Mr. Brand is master here," she said; "do what he tells you: it saves trouble."

The week after I went to Fenhouse, as the companion of Mrs. Brand.

The first day's dinner was a strange affair. After we had seated ourselves, to what was a very scanty supply, there lounged in a youth of about seventeen: a heavy, full-blooded, lumpish being, with a face devoid of intelligence, but more animal than imbecile; not specially good tempered, but not vicious, a mere idle, eating and drinking clown, scarcely raised above the level of a dog or a horse, and without even their instinctive emotions. What an unwholesome, unnatural circle we made! I longed for a little healthy life among us, and turned with a feeling of envy and relief to the common-place servant-maid; who, if not intellectual, was at the least more in accord with pure ordinary life than we.

There was ill-blood between Mr. Brand and Master George, as the boy was called; and I soon understood why. His mother's only son by a former marriage, and heir of the neglected lands lying round Fenhouse, he stood in the way of his step-father, whose influence over his wife was supreme, and who, but for the boy, would have absolute possession of everything. He had married for money, and had been balked of half his prize. I used often to wonder that the two were not afraid to trust themselves in the hands of one so passionate and unscrupulous; but, though Mrs. Brand was undisguisedly afraid of her husband, and the boy was not too stupid to understand that he was hated, and why, neither seemed to look forward to evil days. I do not think that they had mind enough to look to the future in hope or dread. Mother and son loved each other, with the mute instinctive love of dumb animals—a love in which both would be helpless to save if bad times came. They were not much together, and they seldom spoke when they met; but they sat close to each other, always in the same place and on the same chairs, and Mrs. Brand unravelled her eternal slips of muslin, while her son gathered up the threads and thrust them into a canvas bag.

I had been there a fortnight, and I never saw either of them employed in anything else; and I never heard half a dozen words pass between them. It was a silent house at all times; and, more than this, it was a house full of hate. Save this dumb-animal kind of love between the two, not a ray of even kindly feeling existed among any of us. The servant was the mark for every one's ill-temper, while I stood out as a kind of pariah among them all, not even dignified by active dislike. I was shunned, and could not understand why I was there at all. The lady never spoke to me, not even to say good morning; she gave me no duties, but she forbade me no employment. I was free to do what I liked, provided I did not make my existence too manifest to her, and did not speak to her husband or Master George. If

by chance anything like a conversation began—for Mr. Brand had his talkative moods in a violent, angry kind of way—she used to order me out of the room, in just the same tone as she used to speak to the dog. If I remonstrated, as I did once, her only answer was, "You can go if you like; I did not hire you."

One thing especially troubled me. It troubled me because, like all morbidly imaginative people, anything of a mystery terrified me more than an open danger; and this, of which I am going to speak, was a mystery. The boy took no notice of me at the first. He never spoke to me when he came into the room; he passed me in the fields as if he did not see me; indeed, he had always that manner to me—he did not see me—I did not exist for him. I was well content that this should be; but, after I had been there a short time, Mr. Brand began to make distinct mischief between us. From brutish indifference, Master George passed rapidly to brutish aggression. When he met me in the lanes and fields he made mouths at me, and once he flung stones and mud as I passed him; at table he would kick me silently, and whenever I caught his eye he made hideous grimaces, muttering in his broad, provincial accent, "Mad dog! mad dog! We hang mad dogs hereaway!" His insolence and brutality increased daily, and Mrs. Brand encouraged him. This was the mystery. Why should he wish this to hate me?

There was a plot underneath it all which I tormented myself to discover. Day and night the thought haunted me, till I felt growing crazed with dread and terror. I could not conceal my abhorrence of the youth—I was too nervous for that—nor hide the fear with which that wicked man inspired me. I was as helpless as the poor pale woman there, and as thoroughly the victim of a stronger fate.

One night Master George had been more than usually intolerable to me. He had struck me openly before both father and mother, had insulted my misfortunes, and spoken with brutal disrespect of my family. It was a wild winter's night, and the howling wind shook the windows and dashed the trailing ivy-leaves sharply against the panes: a fearful night, making all visions of freedom and escape impossible; a night which necessitated one to be content with one's own fireside, and forbade the idea of wandering farther. Yet it was something worse than death to me to be shut up in that mean room, with its squalid furniture and scanty fire, with such companions, and to feel that I could not escape from them—that they might ill-treat me, mock me, persecute me as they would, and I was bound to bear all without protection or means of escape. The stormy night had excited me, and I felt less than ever able to bear all the insolence and brutality heaped upon me. When Master George struck me again, and called me "mad dog," something seemed to take possession of me. My timidity and nervousness vanished, and I felt as if swept away in a very tumult of passion. I do not know now what it was that I said or did, but I remem-

ber rising passionately from my place, and pouring out a torrent of bitterness and reproach. I was almost unconscious of what I was doing, for I was literally for the moment insane; but I remember the words, "You shall die! you shall die!" rising like a scream through the room. I have not the slightest recollection of how I left the parlour, nor how I got to my own chamber, but it was past midnight when I awoke from what must have been a kind of swoon, and found myself lying on the floor.

The wind was still raging, howling through the trees outside, tearing down branches, and scattering the dead leaves like flakes of frozen snow upon the ground. Every door and window shook throughout the old house, and the wild moaning in the chimneys came, startling, like the cries of tortured beings. Confused and giddy, I rose up out of my trance, stiff with cold and scarcely conscious. But as my brain grew clearer it grew also feverish, and I knew there was no rest for me to-night. My hearing began to be distressingly acute, and every painful thought and circumstance of my life rose up before me with the force and vividness of living scenes actually present to my senses. I paced my room for some time in a state of despair, wringing my hands and sobbing violently, but without tears. By degrees a little calmness came to me, and I determined to go down stairs for a book. I would get some quiet, calm, religious book, which would soothe me like a spiritual opiate, and take me out of the abyss of misery into which I had sunk. What friend, indeed, had I in the world, save the Great Father above us all?

As I opened the door I fancied I heard a stealthy step along the passage. I held my breath to listen, shading the candle with my hand. I was not deceived; there *was* a step passing furtively over the creaking boards in the direction of Master George's room. I shrank back into the doorway. Yet there was nothing to alarm me. A quiet footfall at midnight might be easily accounted for: why should it affect me with mistrust and dread? and why should I feel this overpowering impulse to go towards the sound? I scarcely knew what I expected to find; but something stronger than myself seemed to impel me to the discovery of something horrible; and placing the candle on the floor, I crept noiselessly along the passage, every nerve strung to its utmost tension.

Master George slept in a room at the end of the back-stairs gallery, which ran at right angles to the passage in which my room was situated. My door faced Mr. and Mrs. Brand's; Master George's faced the kitchen stairs, and was properly the servant's room, but she had been moved to a small closet near to me, Mr. Brand not approving of her holding so large a chamber for herself, neither willing to allow the boy anything of a better class. When I stood by my door I could see Mr. and Mrs. Brand's room; but it was only by going the whole length of the back-stairs gallery that I could get to Master George's. I could see now, however,

that his door was open, for a ray of light fell along the staircase wall, and I could hear his heavy snoring breath. And I heard another sound. I heard a man's step in the room; I heard the boards creak and the bed-clothes softly rustle; I heard an impatient kind of moan as of some one disturbed in his sleep, and then a heavy blow, a stifled groan, a man's deep-drawn breath, and the quick, sharp drip of something spilt upon the floor. Dumb from terror, I stood in the doorway of the boy's room. Pale, heavy, motionless on the bed lay the youth, his large limbs carelessly flung abroad in the unconsciousness of sleep, and his face as calm and quiet as if still dreaming. The sheets were wet with blood—red—the light of the candle glistening upon a small red stream that flowed over the side of the bed, on the floor beneath. At a little distance stood Mr. Brand, wiping a knife on a handkerchief. He turned, and our eyes met. He came up to me with an oath, caught me by the throat, and drew the knife across my hands. I remember no more until I awoke in the broad daylight, and found myself in the midst of a crowd gathered round my bed.

Curious eyes stared at me; harsh voices mocked me; rough hands were laid upon me; and I heard myself branded with the burning name of Murderess. Red tracks made by a woman's naked feet—made by *my* feet—led from the boy's room to mine; each track plainly printed on the bare uncarpeted floor—tracks of a woman's feet, and of none other. There was no explaining away these marks and signs of guilt. Who would believe me, a half-mad lonely stranger with such a family history as mine, and, according to popular belief, at any moment liable to make a murderous attack against any one offending? Had not this unhappy youth notoriously offended, and had I not, only that very evening, openly defied and threatened him? Escape was impossible. To all the evidence heaped up against me with such art and cunning, I had but an unsupported assertion, which would be set down as maniacal raving, and only deepen the case against me.

All day I lay there; all that weary sobbing winter's day; and when the night came they fastened me with cords, and left me once more alone. I was so well secured—bound hand and foot, and triply bound—that it was not thought needful to watch me; and they were all too much excited and overwrought to wish to remain through the night with a lunatic murderer, as I was called. So they went, and Mr. Brand locked the door, saying, as he turned away, "We must have no more such dangerous fits of madness, Miss Erfurt!" with a sneer on the word.

I was too hopeless and desolate to think of any plan of escape, feasible or not. The reaction had set in, and I was content to lie there in quiet, and to feel that I had done with life for

ever. It had not offered me so many joys that I should grieve to leave it, and for the shame—who cares for shame in the grave? No; I was content to have done with all that had weighed upon me so long and heavily. I had no one to mourn for me, no one to love me, with a broken heart and a sorrowed faith: I was alone—alone—and might well die out at once, and sleep tranquilly in my murdered grave. And I was not unhappy, thinking all these things. Perhaps my brain was slightly paralysed, so that I could not suffer. However it might be, it was a merciful moment of calm.

It was nearly three o'clock, when I heard a light hand upon the door. The key was turned softly in the lock, and, pale and terrible, like an avenging ghost, the poor bereaved mother glided into my room. She came up to my bed, and silently unfastened the cords. She said no comforting word, she gave me no kind look, no pitying human touch, but in a strange, weak, wan way, she unbound me limb by limb, until I was free.

"Go," she then said, below her breath, still not looking at me. "I do not love you, and *he* did not; but I know that you are innocent, and I do not want your blood on my head. My turn is to come next, but I do not mind, now he has gone. Go at once; that sleep will not last long. I made it come for you."

Without another word she turned from the room, leaving the door open. I got up as she bade me. Without energy, without hope, I quietly dressed myself, and left the house, going forth into the darkness and desolation, more because I had been bidden to do so, than to escape a greater peril. I wandered through the by-roads aimlessly, nervelessly; not shaping my course for any goal, but simply going forwards, to wherever chance might lead me. A poor woman gave me some milk, and I slept, I believe, once beneath a haystack. I remember lying down there, and finding myself again after many hours. In time—I cannot tell you how or when, nor how long I had been out in the fields, but it was evening, and the lamps were lighted—I was in London, reading a description of myself posted up against the walls. I saw myself described as a murderess and a maniac, and a reward offered for my apprehension; my dress, my manners, appearance, gait, voice, all were so minutely noted, as to render safety impossible. Seized with terror I fled: I fled like a wild being hunted and pursued, and I have never rested since.

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